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LILITH

FALL 1995 THE INDEPENDENT JEWISH WOMEN'S MAGAZINE V. 20, N. 3 $4.50

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Musical closing with Paula Teitelbaum

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VOLUME 20, NO. 3

LILITH

FALL 1995

LILITH is named for the legendary predecessor of Eve who insisted on equality with Adam. After the Holy One created the first human being, Adam, the Holy One created a woman, also from the earth, and called her Lilith. Lilith said: "We are equal because we both come from the earth. . . ."
(From *The Alphabet of Ben Sira*, 23a-b)

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translated by Henny Wenkart
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FROM THE EDITOR

Usually I'm a curmudgeonly person who complains that this or that aspect of every experience (or every issue of this magazine, for that matter) could have been done differently, by which I always mean better. But our daughter Yael's bat mitzvah, which we marked in Israel this past July, met all my expectations—and hers too, I hope. The celebration included an aliyah near the Wall, an aliyah at Shabbat services in synagogue and a hike through ancient pastures. It's Part One that I'll share with you here.

Yael's 13th birthday (by the Gregorian calendar) fell on Shabbat this year, on the second day of the Hebrew month of Av. In Jerusalem, the valiant Women of the Wall have for seven years been trying to expand the opportunties for women to worship in a full women's prayer service at the Western Wall. They meet to pray once a month, on Rosh Chodesh. (The first day of the new month, when the moon is new too, was traditionally a women's holiday because of the links between women's cycles and the moon.) On Rosh Chodesh the Torah is read, so for Yael an opportunity for a very special celebration the very day before her birthday presented itself. She could have her first aliyah, her first chance to be called to the Torah as a bat mitzvah, take place in this extraordinary gathering of Women of the Wall.

The Supreme Court in Israel is deciding right now how women will be permitted to worship at this holy site. After e-mailed queries and phone calls, I learned from the organizers that until the court renders its decision they are prohibited from having a Torah scroll on the women's side of the Wall. For now, the Women of the Wall gather at the Western Wall, daven *shacharit* (the morning prayers) and then back away from the Wall to a section of the Jewish Quarter of the Old City (a three minute walk) and bring out their Torah scroll. My conversations with Chaia Beckerman, and the other women who have devotedly prompted

EDITH ROBBINS

and led the women's prayer sevice each Rosh Chodesh, didn't prepare me fully for the sweetness of the occasion.

After announcing the protocol, Betsy Cohen-Kallus led the *shacharit* service in a quiet voice.We sang comfortably—but not at the tops of our lungs, lest we inspire the kind of backlash that had interrupted women's services at the wall a few years ago. The women included the regulars from Jerusalem—about half a dozen—plus our friends and family (men over on *their* side) and a group of 8 or 10 women from Haifa who want to start their own women's prayer service there. One woman had brought her ten year old, knowing that Yael would be called to the Torah, in order that her daughter would see a bat mitzvah, for the first time in a women's prayer group, "and would want one herself." Yael, a little uncertain herself about what to expect, was already a role model!

After *shacharit* we climbed the stairs opposite the Wall to reach a setting of sublime loveliness: the Archaeological Garden, a roofless stone room, bare except for an arched window which looks out over the plaza of the Western Wall. On the floor stand two broad, stone tables, like altars of a sort, one of which is the perfect height to serve as a lectern for reading from an unrolled Torah scroll.

I was nervous for Yael, awed by the spectacularly beautiful seting and the women's clear voices ringing out freely, now, in the Jerusalem air, and overjoyed to be welcomed so lovingly by the Women of the Wall. Yael was called to the Torah for the first time, I for the umpteenth time, but in the end it was Yael who sang out sweetly and confidently (wearing the prayer shawl that one of the women had draped over her shoulders as she approached the Torah), and I who was stumbling and nervous, barely able to speak the short *dvar Torah* I'd promised to present.

After Yael's aliyah the women sang to her, blessed her and our family, danced her around, and wove her into a community of Jewish women.

Susan Weidman Schneider

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LETTERS

w Girls Eat

s a Jewish college-aged woman, I too have dealt with many issues regarding food and negative images of body ["Jewish Women and d," Summer '95]. The Jewish days, whether Chanukah or sover, always represent guilt me. I remember one Yom pur in particular when I was I fasted the entire day, but at "break the fast," I binged, then had a purging encounter n the porcelain toilet. We are posed to eat to end the pain of fast, yet my "full belly" guilt even more painful. I have ne a long way, but I don't yet y accept my body.

This past summer I was coun-or at a Conservative Jewish mp in Ojai, California. Several he girls had serious eating orders. They commented oughout the day that they e "fat," which they are not. e saddest part was when bbat arrived. After the utiful meal—and believe me, the only camp meal I can use description for—I watched n make trips to the bathroom purge. I recognized this ause I lived it myself. The piness and peace that fills day night is shattered with ce bitterness and self-hatred. I eve that as a woman I must o fight this disease—and it *is* sease. Judaism teaches us to ourselves—but it is a lesson comes hard to many Jewish s and young women.

Alysa Zeltzer
Encino, CA

Rural Jewish Feminists

Re: Susan Schnur's Summer '95 article, "Aren't You Gonna Eat That?" I also have a compost pile and vermicomposting bin (worms), and have always felt there was a certain Jewish economizing attitude that added to my pleasure of feeding the worms. I bet Ms. Schnur has learned a lot about being a Jewish woman through gardening: I have a guilt-ridden time weeding and pruning. It strikes me that perhaps Christians are more prepared to sacrifice something for the good of the whole. (They employ that metaphor constantly.)

Jews have been urbanized longer than any other people, yet our religion is agrarian based. What happens when we go "back to the land?" I live on 125 wooded acres. The harvest holidays seem "real" to me, but the timing is often off. How did our Eastern European ancestors cope? Can you really eat comfortably in a sukkah in October in Russia? Passover was great this year in Vermont, but spring had not sprung yet at all!

Many topics could use a dose of Jewish Female Introspection: gardening, environmentalism, child-rearing, and, yes, husbandry (can the feminine of that be wifery?).

Carolyn Sloane
Wallingford, VT

An Orphan Remembers

In response to the Summer '95 review of *These Are Our Children: Jewish Orphanages in the U.S.*–I grew up orphaned in the 1930's in Roxbury and Dorchester (at the time, two Jewish sections of Boston). I lived right behind Blue (Jew) Hill Avenue behind a Jewish restaurant, and I slept in the aroma of Jewish cooking wafting through the restaurant fans into my open front bedroom window. From playing Queen Esther (in my aunt's nightgown) in the Purim play, to listening to the beauty of the Psalms recited daily in my (very Jewish) public school, to absorbing the colorful Bible tales at Young Israel's Saturday morning story hour for children, my experience growing up in those Jewish neighborhoods opened important scholarly doors for me. (I am over 70 and have written 8 books; I received my B.S. at 40; Ph.D. at 45.)

But I never would have survived my childhood if it hadn't been for Jewish philanthropy and social services. My mother died when I was 10, and my brother and I were taken from my father by the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children. We moved in with my grandparents. They had no money, but the Jewish philanthropies sent me to summer camp, provided counseling for me as a troubled adolescent, and, when I was 18 and supporting our household, the Jewish Women's College Club gave me money for evening classes. This changed me forever.

Not to sentimentalize growing up a Jewish orphan in a poor neighborhood, but my neighborhood was a community, nurturing its children in a way that is rare in poor areas. I still have a craving for the Jewish cooking of those restaurants on Blue Hill Avenue. There are crises that only *lukshen kugel* can ease.

Ruth Harriet Jacobs
Wellesley, MA

Hiding Behind Hair

I enjoyed your Spring '95 issue on Jewish hair. I make my living as a hair stylist. On a daily basis I deal with growing, cutting, changing, and removing it. A year ago I went from having long hair (dark, thick, wavy, down to my shoulder blades) to short short hair, 2-3" long. I had been *hiding* behind all that hair. Suddenly, I felt like yelling, "Here I am! This is *me*!" No longer did I have to worry about my hair (e.g. no bad hair days). I was no longer a slave to fashion. People stopped me on the street, "What a great haircut! You're so brave to go that short."

I admit to being shocked at my silhouette--a head with ears sticking out. I also admit to feeling less feminine—a little more harsh. But is it harsh, or just powerful? Clients often say how much they'd love to have short hair, but their husbands or boyfriends won't "let" them. I tell them, "But, *you're* the one who wears it!" But suddenly I understood them because my egalitarian boyfriend (of 6 years) was less than thrilled with my hairless look, and, though he never asked me to grow it back, I *was* afraid of not being attractive in his eyes. Those of us who rebel against conformity still have fears we don't care to admit.

Rachelle Skloff
Nashville, TN

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KOL ISHAH

"WOMAN'S VOICE." TRADITIONALLY, THE VOICE OF THE JEWISH WOMAN W
NOT TO BE HEARD IN PUBLIC, LEST IT AROUSE MEN. NO MORE. THESE PA
ARE MEANT FOR NEWS ABOUT JEWISH WOMEN, IN OUR OWN STRONG VOIC

THE BETROTHAL FIASCO

When Israel Goldstein, a 39-year-old Orthodox Jewish man from Brooklyn, interpreted a biblical passage as allowing him to betroth his 11-year-old daughter to a man whose identity he refused to disclose, he gained complicated leverage against his wife in their bitter five-year divorce battle. This archaic practice of betrothing young daughters was used during medieval times (when arranged marriages were the norm) to deal creatively with erratic economic conditions. Whenever a father had dowry—even if his daughter was literally a toddler—he seized the moment in the girl's interest, to ensure that she would have a husband. Goldstein, however, has warped the purpose of this practice, and, unfortunately, his act has triggered about 20 other Orthodox men to do the same.

The complex betrothal ruse works like this: Since Goldstein is the *only* one who can identify his daughter's fiance, he forces his wife to regard him as indispensable to his daughter's welfare. In other words, he has "half-married" his daughter, who, without even knowing who her fiance is, cannot begin proceedings to attain a Jewish divorce in order to have an eventual *real* marriage. By withholding information, Goldstein vengefully makes his daughter and his wife painfully beholden to him.

Orthodox feminists have responded to this outrage with disgust. Rivka Haut, a co-director of Agunah, Inc. (an organization that advocates for women whose husbands are refusing them Jewish divorces and who therefore cannot remarry), says that, "Many rabbis have been fully aware of this tragic circumstance for a long time, but they weren't even bemoaning the problem until it hit The New York Times. A problem with *kashrut* the rabbis solve immediately, but problems involving abuse to girls or women go unresolved. Now they'll deal with it because they have been embarrassed by the secular media."

Haut feels that the issue of *kedusha ketana* (betrothal of a minor) has great impact because it exacerbates the already enormous problem faced by thousands of *agunot* (literally, 'chained women'). Referring to *agunot,* Haut explains, "Many women are scared to death of their husbands, and are therefore forced to stay in physically and/or emotionally abusive marriages. Even if they leave, they're still legally bound."

Blu Greenberg, well-known Orthodox feminist and writer, has a different reaction to the Goldstein affair. "The great attention being paid to *kedusha ketana* is tarring the Orthodox community. I see Israel Goldstein as the Jewish equivalent of an ax-murderer and he should be treated as such. We have enough problems without amplifying isolated incidents. As an Orthodox feminist, I choose my battles so that things don't backfire. Don't get me wrong, this is a horrible incident, but the *agunot* are the real ones who suffer, and the Jewish community should focus its attention on them. If the potential for abuse had not been built into the original Jewish laws, this would never have been able to happen in the first place. We need to concentrate on the *get* (divorce) laws! The uproar of minor betrothal will die down and the *agunot* will be left in the same exact place."

KEDUSHA KETANA SPOTLIGHTS HOW A FEW MEN (AND MANY MALE RABBIS) USE JEWISH LAW TO CONTROL, MANIPULATE, AND TAKE REVENGE UPON JEWISH WOMEN.

In the meantime, Debra Nussbaum Cohen, who first brought this situation to public attention and has written extensively on the issue for the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, points out that a solution to particular case of minor betrothal already been found. Rabbi Shlomo Zal Auerbach, a leading figure in the Ortho Jewish community, made a statem several months before his death in Febr that would liberate the now 13-year- Sarah Leah Goldstein—but his staten has no applicability to other possible c in the future. Auerbach, arguing Goldstein never revealed the identity of two men who served as *halakhic* betro witnesses, said that this "bad faith" ges legally nullifies Goldstein's entire act. July 10, Orthodox Jewish religious juc finally assembled—after letting an en year go by!—to make a writ proclamation (not yet signed by all of th to support Rabbi Auerbach.

According to Norma Joseph, an assis professor of religion at Concor University in Montreal and an avid *agu* rights advocate, "This use of *kedusha ket* cries out for a solution to the problem *agunot*. It highlights how some people using Jewish law to control and manipu women in general. I am thrilled that R Auerbach found a solution for this *one* c but why did so many other Orthodox ra hush up this problem and why couldn't find an overarching legal solution fo Why did it take over a year for the relig judges to formally enact it, and why di anyone bother to tell Mrs. Goldstein ab this until now? The fact remains that e though Rabbi Auerbach helped Sa Goldstein, her mother Gita is still *agunah. Batei din* (Jewish courts) nee have more concern for women." Greenberg throws down the gauntlet, " rabbis quickly found a solution to *kedu ketana,* so they have it within their powe find a solution for *agunot*. The desir preserve male initiative and prerogativ Jewish divorce laws needs to end. If the a rabbinic will, there's a *halakhic* way."

–Amy Lila Green

ROOTS AND BRANCHES THEATRE: AGING WOMEN (AND MEN) REFUSE TO DISAPPEAR

Roots and Branches Theatre, creatively combining the talents of Manhattan's elderly community with that of NYU undergraduates from Tisch School of the Arts, gives old people back their voices.

Based since 1985 at the Jewish Association for Services for the Aged, the inter-generational theater has performed for thousands of senior citizens throughout New York. Every spring, the core ensemble of 11 elderly women and men (eight women; three men) and three to five interning students, produce original scripts which challenge age and gender stereotypes.

Exploring the issue of make-up: Robyn Kapz, Ida Harnden, Roz Dunn and Martha Libman.

"Aging is a tremendously feminist issue that's not paid enough attention to," says director Arthur Strimling. At Roots and Branches, young and old create a discourse on stage, expressing all the emotions of aging: rage, desires, frustrations, and the continual battle against being rendered invisible. "I'm approaching the end of my life and I've never read a book about how it feels inside to grow old," says Roots and Branches actress, Molly Seif, 89.

Many of the lines are the actors' (young and old) own words. At age 85, Seif played the role of Juliet in the theater's production, written by the ensemble with Christian McEwen, of "Romeo and Juliet and Juliet and Romeo and Romeo and Juliet," a play involving the relationships of three couples (one elderly, two inter-generational) who meet on a cruise ship (the SS Verona). During rehearsal, conflict arose as the ensemble worked on Juliet's death scene. Should Juliet die or not? The ensemble split right down the middle: the elder members had enough of death in everyday life and wanted to change the plot; the younger members, however, disagreed, arguing that to have Juliet *not* die was a violation of Shakespeare's artistic intentions. In the end, Juliet does die, but the cast members create a fight on stage about whether or not she should have lived. In the final scene Juliet pops back up to exclaim: "I've had to wait this long to play Juliet—this is my death scene and I'm going to have it!"

Old people, theatre members remind the audience, are invisible on our streets: Magazines do not showcase elderly women on their covers; "old" *means* outdated; people do not like to be reminded of their mortality. The theater explores these issues, providing a painfully intimate look at the ways our society treats its elderly. "LOOKIN' GOOD: A Follies," R&B's most recent production, features "The Incredible Disappearing Woman—Look, she ages and no one notices her anymore!" Explains Seif, "You take it for granted that people ignore you because you're old—you're not an individual, you're not sexual or complex. You're 'that old lady'."

"I DON'T TELL PEOPLE MY AGE BECAUSE THEN PEOPLE EXPECT ME TO ACT MY AGE."

"Each year Roots and Branches players become a new and unique inter-generational family," says director Arthur Strimling. "They confront each other's stereotypes and discuss their similarities despite age difference. The plays develop out of these specific and authentic interactions." Etta Denben is one ensemble member who—at age 90—has discovered her theatrical voice. "In my old age," Denben says, "I became an *actiressa*—that's Jewish for actress."

–Shira Zeltzer

To book Roots and Branches for your group, call (212) 501-1042, or write to J.A.S.A., 40 West 68th Street, New York, NY 10023.

Roots and Branches is looking for evening performance space. If you know of any, please contact them.

SINGING JEWISH WOMEN'S MUSIC

Conductor Elayne Robinson Grossman recently celebrated her 18th anniversary with New York's Rottenberg Chorale, a 45-voice choir of men and women, by presenting a program of 20 musical selections called "Music by and About Jewish Women." Grossman, a skilled and expressive conductor, brought forth a polished and richly communicative sound. Featuring the work of 19 living composers (five of them in the audience), Grossman recently explained to a reporter that when she, "dug around for material for the concert, I found treasures that far surpassed my expectations. Although women are relatively new to the scene of conducting and composing Jewish music, I discovered a good number of female composers, and they truly express their Jewish souls."

The Rottenberg Chorale and Chamber Singers in Merkin Concert Hall.

Premiering at the anniversary concert were works by composers Helen Greenberg of Toronto, Caroll Goldberg and Benjie Ellen Schiller of New York, and Elaine Broad of Interlochen, Michigan. A *conte fable* (story accompanied by music) by storyteller Peninnah Schram and conductor Grossman also had its first staging.

The evening began with a new musical setting of "*Eitz Chayim Hee*" ("A Tree of Life is *She*," Grossman points out), and then continued with female-oriented texts that included a medieval Ladino folk song about a dark little girl named Morenica; a Hebrew poem by Leah Goldberg translated as "The Girl Sings to the Stream"; the biblical words of Ruth to her mother-in-law; Naomi Shemer's "Jerusalem of Gold" in Hebrew (says Grossman, "Jerusalem is likened to a woman—loving peace; the wish of all women is peace"); the Yiddish "*Sheyn Vi Di Levoneh*" ("Beautiful Like the Moon"); and a haunting solo for voice and keyboard adapted from the Song of Songs and the Jewish wedding contract.

"The Leah Goldberg poem was especially important to me because it's about a girl coming of age, entering the turmoil of adolescence," says Grossman. "In all the repertoire, we see plenty about men—work songs, study songs. Women have lullabies, songs about fixing and washing clothes. But here's a text about a young girl wondering, 'What's out there in the world for me?' This text is not about marriage; it's about a girl's fleeting innocence and the polyphonic call of her future."

A particularly rich piece, "Hannah," by

AN ART INSTITUTION THAT SPECIFICALLY COMMISSIONS COMPOSERS TO WRITE JEWISH *AND* FEMALE WORKS

Cantor Benjie Ellen Schiller, answered a long-term quest of the conductor's. "For years I would sit in shul during this text on Rosh Hashanah and wonder, 'Why why why are we speaking about a woman's infertility at the beginning of the Jewish year?' Benjie's choral setting finally brought me an understanding. Hannah goes up to the mountain of God, and there she teaches us what it means to be speechless, to communicate without words. This text is not about petitioning; it's about how humans don't understand God's plan, but how we must go on in life anyway, finding joy.

"For Benjie's part, she's been on a professional quest to define what a woman cantor should sound like. We know it's different from a male, but what *exactly* is it? 'Hannah' turned out to be a perfect vehicle for both Benjie and me."

The Rottenberg Chorale in 1995 seems incontrovertibly Jewish in its orientati but this was not always the case. "For first few years, the Chorale did not h any Jewish content," rememb Grossman. "When Tzipora Jochsberg the founder of the Hebrew Arts Scho first phoned me in 1977, she said, "I h a choir of 5 people and would like you build it into one of the major Jew choirs in the Uni States." At the time I like any other Jew musician, learning trade at secular schools Juilliard, N.Y.U., Brook College. I followed arou conductors. I have alw been enchanted by human singing voice, didn't want to face audience and sing.

"My goal was to c duct the Masses—Moz Haydn, Verdi, Britten. when Tzipora called remembered the Jew music I had heard here in Israel. Tzipora had taught me *h* [recorder] when I was 7. I started to excited. But it was really hard to *f* Jewish choral music. So by 1978 I doing a doctoral dissertation that wa massive search for Jewish choral musi was returning to my Jewish self. As a ch I had gone to Crown Heights Yeshiva; dad was a kosher butcher. I began to that it was essential for me not only express myself through beautiful music, through beautiful Jewish music."

And 18 years later—how does it feel?

"My greatest satisfaction is stepp back and saying, 'We're celebrati Jewish diversity by bringing all of t together. We're celebrating the voices Jewish women as characters, singe composers and conductors. We're relat back to that tree of life that we all st from and grow from.'

"I've learned that a pretty voice al doesn't reach the soul—it's the *texts* really let us soar spiritually. And alwa always, the music must be the high quality possible."

—*Susan Sch*

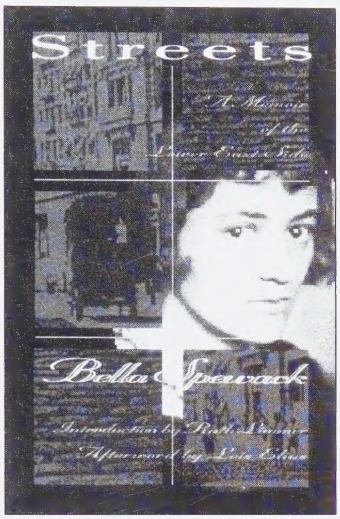
25 YEARS OF CELEBRATING WOMEN AUTHORS

magine that you'd never heard of Zora Neale Hurston, Rebecca Harding Davis, or Jo Sinclair. Imagine that you'd never heard of any but three or four women novelists. That's largely what the world English literature looked like before The minist Press.

Founded by Florence Howe in 1970, The minist Press was begun as a reaction to the r total absence of published works by and out women. Howe, then an assistant fessor of English at Goucher College for men in Maryland, had been trying for veral years to teach what had yet to be led "Women's Studies." The problem was t there weren't any texts to teach from. e Feminist Press was Howe's activist ution: she decided that she herself would eate classroom texts (and role model terial) for young women writers.

Howe recalls that, in those early years, one of us knew that there even existed s ocean of women writers. Their work d simply been ignored. In the '60's, you uldn't even buy a paperback of Virginia oolf's classic, *Mrs. Dalloway*." Twenty-e years later, The Feminist Press has blished over 150 titles, including the first n-sexist children's books, and the first ries of non-European international men's writing. "Many of the authors that were the first to publish in the '70's are w required college reading in the '90's," we says proudly.

In honor of its anniversary, The minist Press is hosting several events, including a celebration of its Midwest authors (September 30 at the Minneapolis Public Library) and a New York City "Literary Dinner Theater" hosted by Gloria Steinem (at Hunter College on October 30).



COURTESY THE FEMINIST PRESS

The Feminist Press Kicks Off A New Book Series on Jewish Women

"IN THE EARLY '60'S, YOU COULD HARDLY FIND A PAPERBACK OF VIRGINIA WOOLF'S CLASSIC *MRS. DALLOWAY*"

They're also kicking off four new book series—on music, travel, peace, and Jews. The latter series, funded in memory of Helen Rose Scheuer, begins with the publication of Bella Cohen Spewack's story of her immigrant childhood in the early 1900's, *Streets: A Memoir of the Lower East Side*. Next in the Jewish women series will be *The Mamie Papers*, a fascinating turn-of-the-century exchange of letters between a young Jewish prostitute in Philadelphia and the Boston woman who mentored her. Third in line is a collection of short stories by Latin American Jews.

When asked how she feels now that the Feminist Press is 25, Howe laughs. "Mostly I'm surprised. I never thought we would keep going indefinitely. I thought other publishers would begin doing this work and we would become obsolete." As for the future, she told me (a young feminist writer), "This could still all disappear. All these women were visible in their day, and their works were lost. They could be lost again. There's still lots of work to be done, and young people like you will have to carry it on."

-Karen Bekker

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL FEMINIST BOOKSTORE!

Many independent bookstores—especially feminist ones—are being hit hard by the expansion of large chain stores in their area. Even a slight decrease in sales can force a small store, without the resources of a franchise behind it, to close. Feminist bookstores play a vital role in maintaining freedom and diversity of expression, and in providing the materials with which we, as feminists, educate ourselves.

Carol Seajay, co-founder of Old Wives' Tales bookstore in San Francisco, wrote recently in Ms. magazine, "If the decisions about which books will be sold become centralized into the hands of buyers for a few corporations rather than being distributed among thousands of independently owned bookstores, what will we be able to read? Whose ideas will be selected for mass distribution and whose ideas will be excluded as too marginal?"

If there's a women's bookstore in your neighborhood, visit it often. Please.

–K. B.

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ALTER KACYZNE, COURTESY OF YIVO; FROM THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

My First Days at *Kheder*

THE SCHOOL MEMORIES OF A LITTLE GIRL IN LITHUANIA

translated by Henny Wenkart

What was it like to start kindergarten if you were a Lithuanian Jewish girl 165 years ago? In this rare autobiographical portrait of female Jewish life, Pessele Epstein, 1833-1916, (later known as Pauline Wengeroff), is five years old; her big sister, Chave, is seven. The girls' father, a Talmud scholar whose lineage includes more than ten generations of heads of yeshivas, is a well-to-do contractor for the Czar. He can afford—as only a wealthy Jew could—to send his seven daughters to kheder. *The following selection is Wengeroff's earliest Jewish memory:*

To put an end to my adventures through mountain, field and underbrush, and to my perilous games in the hayloft, my mother determined to send me to *kheder*, and to entrust my education to the same *melamed* who was teaching Hebrew to my older sister.

The first day of school! I had been in suspense to see what the "sub-assistant" would be like. He would walk me the long way to school. He turned out to be a long, thin youth with long, thin blond curls dangling before a pair of donkey's ears. His name was Velvel.

As we walked along my sister pointed out all the remarkable sights and explained everything to me. We passed many booths and stands with rummage for sale, and pressed through crowds of people. A wild dog followed and attacked us. We looked to Velvel, but he was the first to scream in fright, and run faster and faster so that we could not keep up.

Chave grabbed my hand, and terrified—without moving from the spot—we exhaled the following verse all in one breath:

Excerpted from Pauline Wengeroff's *Memoirs of a Grandmother*, published in German in 1913 [M. Poppelauer, Berlin].
Translation © Henny Wenkart 1995.

Doggie doggie want to bite me?
Three devils will come and fright thee.
They will tear you limb from limb.
Doggie, doggie, want to bite me?
Three devils will come and fright thee.
They will tear you limb from limb.
I am Jacob, you are Esau.
I am Jacob, you are Esau.

The dog calmed down and let us pass. Velvel, our tried and true protector, waited for us, and our procession went on its way. At about 8 a.m. we arrived at the *kheder*.

Once long, long ago the little house must have had a coat of yellow paint. Now it stood sunk deep into the ground, its tiny window panes admitting little light, surrounded by a mound of earth on which my future classmates and my sister's friends were playing various games.

All of them opened their eyes wide and stared at me.

At the entrance we stopped: it was not so easy for the uninitiated to find her way into the house.

My sister led. She opened the door, jumped down into the room, and held out her hand to me. I grabbed at it and put down my leg, feeling in the dark for the sill, which turned out to be a rotting chunk of wood buried in the mud floor. I had to feel a long way down to find it. Then I let down my other leg and bravely took a step into the room.

Chave warned me not to trip over the ladder which half-barred the way. Another step, and there we were at the water barrel with a great ladle suspended from its rim—that ladle which would soon become a familiar temptation to get up and have a drink. There was also a pitcher and a broom.

On the left I glimpsed a door whose wooden handle was rubbed smooth as glass. Chave opened it and stepped into the schoolroom, and I followed her. There was not room for both of us to stand up straight in the cramped space between the door and the school bench, which was attached to a long table covered with texts and prayer books. Across the table, a second bench backed right up against the far wall.

I leave it to the imagination of the reader to estimate the width of that room!

Reb Leser, the *melamed*, reigned over this domain, seated at the head of the table. He was a powerfully built man whose heavy shoulders completely obscured the window beside him. His large, water-blue protruding eyes, with two small earlocks in constant motion before them, his long face, his pointed gray beard, all exuded self-confidence and pride. The strong, swollen veins in his forehead gave evidence of great energy. His clothing was suited to the period and to his station: short trousers fastened at the knee over thick gray stockings; gigantic shoes; shirtsleeves of dubious cleanliness; a colorful, dark cotton *arbakanfos* [prayer vest with *tzitzes*, or fringes] which took the place of a jacket in summer. (In winter he wore a quilted jacket.) A small black skullcap completed the costume.

At the other end of the table sat the chief assistant, his head always bowed, holding a long, thin wooden rod called a *deitelholtz*, with which he pointed letter by letter to where the children were reading. His job was to repeat with us the lessons taught by the *melamed*. He was always serious. His nose was shaped like a spade; his eyes were small and melancholy; his two long black earlocks moved ceaselessly.

My sister and I stood still. We had to, since there was only that one spot to stand in. When Reb Leser caught sight of me he cried out, "Ah!"

He got up, grabbed me by my armpits, lifted me up and sat me down beside him. The other girls came running in to inspect this new phenomenon—me—and compare notes. My sister, who felt at home here, sat down at her place, but kept glancing over protectively.

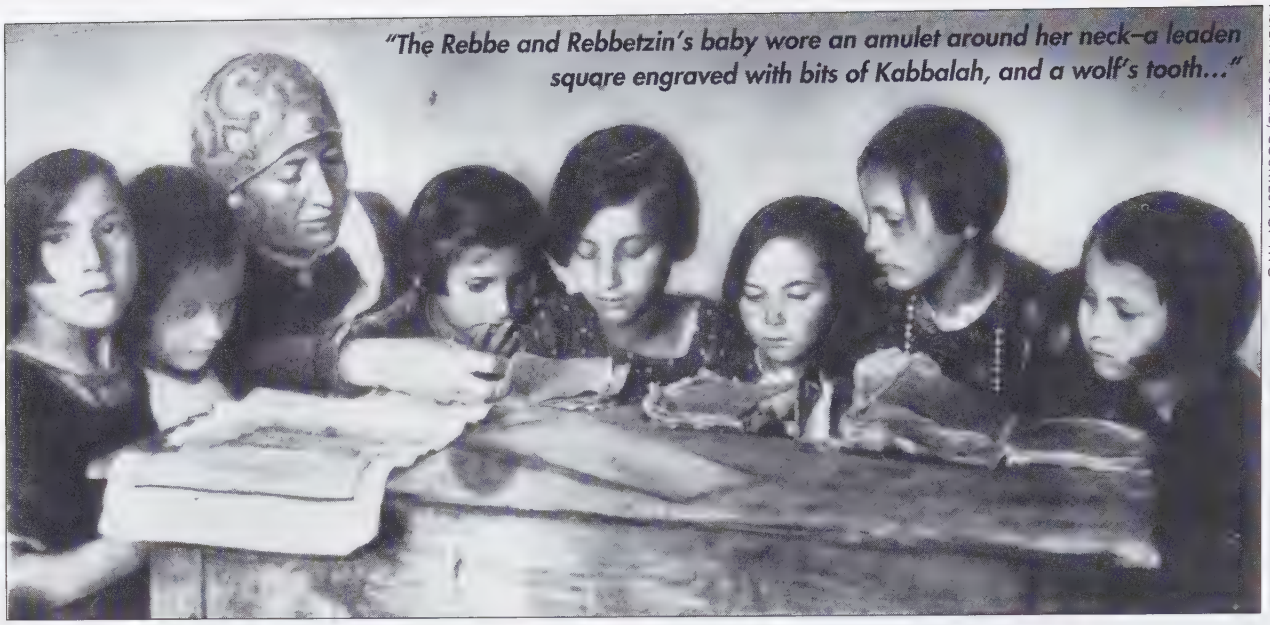
Fear, embarrassment, the many strange faces, the low ceiling at which I kept looking nervously, all this and probably the after-effect of the angry dog too, choked me until I knew nothing better to do except cry.

I was ashamed, I was mad at myself, but I couldn't help it. Reb Leser tried to quiet me. I would not have to start learning today, he said. I could just play with the others at recess. But the more he talked, the more I cried. Finally he guessed that what was frightening me most were the many curious eyes.

He stamped his enormous feet and shouted, "Out! Into the street, *shikses*! What are you staring at, have you never seen anything like this before?"

They scattered in all directions. My sister went over a paragraph with the Rebbe, repeated it with the chief assistant, and then tried to take me outside to play. But I wouldn't hear of it.

It was not easy to get down into the dark, cramped, low *kheder*: you had to feel around with your leg for the sill—a rotting chunk of wood buried in the mud floor—and then jump.


"The Rebbe and Rebbetzin's baby wore an amulet around her neck–a leaden square engraved with bits of Kabbalah, and a wolf's tooth..."

ALTER KACYZNE, COURTESY OF YIVO

Lunch. Velvel, our shining knight, appeared outside juggling pitchers, pots, bowls, glasses and spoons of various kinds and sizes, bread, and food in the following configuration: the pots and pitchers were tied to his waist by means of his wide belt; hanging down over his hips the bread had been stowed by the resourceful youth next to his chest between his shirt and his *kaftan*; the full bowls were piled one on top of the other, pressed against his chest with one arm and held fast with the other. The dessert of nuts, apples, cooked beans and peas weighed down his deep thief's pockets. Thus laden, the ship of state made slowly for its port, the *kheder*.

"Hurry up," the Rebbe commanded, scolding Velvel for his tardiness. "Hand out the bowls and spoons!"

Velvel poured all our food together into one large bowl. I received a spoon with a little hole in the handle to signify that it was for use with dairy food. I turned it this way and that, afraid to plunge into that huge bowl. I was thinking, "This is how I'm supposed to eat? Not from my china dish?"

The tears started back in my eyes and my throat constricted. But I finally forced myself to take one spoonful and choke it down, together with my tears.

The meal over, the Rebbe helped me down off the high bench. Despite my vexation, I determined to set into my mind all the many ways in which this meal was better than the kind I was used to: Here we could talk or take a drink during the meals whenever we wanted, while at home we had to wait until after the roast. Here we could get up whenever we liked, while at home we had to wait until Father had risen from his place.

When I wanted another drink after lunch, someone explained to me about the big ladle by the water barrel. Then my sister took me by one hand, another pupil by the other, and I finally did go out to play until seven in the evening. We were called back into the schoolroom for the evening prayer. The assistant stood in the middle and we watched him and repeated every word. Then we hurried home.

I was so exhausted by the events of the day that I could not tell my Nana much about them. I drank my tea and fell asleep, without any supper.

In less than a week I was quite at home, familiar with every nook and corner of the school. In addition to the long, narrow schoolroom there was also, it turned out, a long dark crawl hole—no other name will describe it—containing the beds of the Rebbe and Rebbetzin. In front of their beds, suspended from a beam, hung the cradle of their only child, Altinke. Whoever came and went through this passage knocked against the cradle and set it in motion, and then it remained in motion for a long time.

One could not maintain that this room, or the linen on the beds and in the cradle, were clean. But one must be content with one's lot, the saying goes, and the inhabitants of this hut were. Their only concern was for Altinke, the last remaining child of the four they had produced. Although she was over two years old, she was unable to stand or walk. She wore an amulet around her neck—a leaden square engraved with bits from the Kabbalah, and a little mezuzah. These, as well as a wolf's tooth, were suspended from a ribbon which was pasted on to her quilted shirt by means of filth and spit.

This unhappy little creature spent most of her time lying in the cradle, since the Rebbetzin Feige operated a number of cottage industries: she baked a special honey cake containing an herb to drive out worms; she cooked the peas and beans the pupils bought from her every day for snacks; and

Gendered Jewish History

Haskalah memoirists regarded the Enlightenment positively. But Pauline Wengeroff's autobiography urges us to remember that these memoirists are *male* [eager to "escape the clutches of overpowering mothers-in-law and fertility-trap wives"]. For women *as a class*, however, the Enlightenment signified constriction and tragic loss.

In a chapter about Pauline Wengeroff (the author of this accompanying *kheder* memoir) in the new book, *Gender and Judaism*, edited by Tamar Rudavsky [New York University Press, 1995], Shulamit Magnus hails Wengeroff's autobiography as the first instance wherein "a major epoch of Jewish history [the Enlightenment] is refracted through a female lens."

Other memoirs of the Enlightenment era are written by men—who uniformly find WOMEN to be one of the chief problems of traditional Jewish life. According to these male accounts, traditional Jewish females have way too much power and are "manipulative, overpowering, abusive mothers-in-law, into whose clutches the future *maskilim* fall when, as child-husbands, they go to live in their in-laws' homes. Wives are fertility traps, people with whom they share no meaningful relationship yet who will, unless resisted, anchor the *maskilim* in the suffocating world of tradition and familial responsibility," writes Magnus.

Wengeroff's husband, a chassid who threw off his faith and pressured his wife into finally relinquishing her kosher kitchen and *shaytl* (to her great sorrow), doubtless would agree with these male accounts. According to Pauline Wengeroff, however, the "old" world—according to Jewish women—was rich and rewarding. Writes Magnus:

While the men of Wengeroff's family were in synagogue on the Ninth of Av, the day of mourning for the destruction of the Temple, the women evoked the drama and anguish of Jewish exile with ash-marked carpets at home. They sat on the prescribed footstools of mourning to read the Book of Lamentations, with Wengeroff's mother leading the women (Pauline, her sisters, maids) in weeping. In the days preceding Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, Wengeroff's mother would be visited by a semi-official female spiritualist called a Gabete, who officiated at a solemn, awesome ceremony of remembrance and penance—a non-rabbinic, purely female exercise. Gabetes also determined the needs of the poor in the community and solicited charity from wealthy women; one such Gabete was a fixture in Wengeroff's house...When a girl became a bride, she was visited by a Gollerke who performed the ritual shaving of her head. If her marriage meant leaving her hometown, the bride bade farewell to friends and relatives accompanied by a Reisele, an honorary escort.

Clearly the strife over Judaism in Wengeroff's marriage was far from being a personal predicament. "It was part of a marital disease widespread among Jewish couples," writes Magnus. "Women as a class were fighting to preserve tradition against men who would jettison much or all of it in the name of progress and acceptance in the world outside the ghetto."

In the Enlightened Jewish household, women became suddenly "privatized"—no longer tolerated as wage earners. As wives lost their economic role, husbands used that fact to demand religious "reform" of the household. "Traditional Jewish society marked distinctly separate and unequal spheres for men and women, but at least women had a recognized sphere: the home," writes Magnus. Modernity, however, took away the home from women. Wengeroff's husband "dictated the character of her kitchen, something neither of her parents (or his) would have found imaginable."

Wengeroff herself writes bitterly about the male double-standard: "Preaching modern ideas like freedom, equality and fraternity in *society*, these young men were, at home, the greatest despots toward their wives, demanding ruthlessly the fulfillment of their wishes. Quite a few wives did not want to give way, but the spirit of the age won in this struggle and the weaker yielded, with bleeding hearts. This is what happened to others, and to me."

No amount of personal strength, writes Magnus, "can counter overwhelming social forces, which is what, in Wengeroff's telling, overtook her and other Jewish women in her time."

—Susan Schnur

she tended a hen and her chicks. All this left her little time to carry the child in her arms.

Every day she chose a pupil to help her, and she soon discovered a willing and obedient helper in me. Sometimes I rocked the baby—I loved doing this—sometimes I floured the paddle with which she pushed the loaves of bread into the oven, sometimes I found the egg which the hen would lay every day. If the egg was still warm, I loved to rub it across my eyes. All of this was part of *kheder*!

One day the Rebbetzin saw me bend down from the *pripoczok* [the lower part of the stove] and take up the broody hen. Misunderstanding what I was doing, she rushed over, grabbed me by the shoulder and started to scream: "What are you doing? What do you want? *Meshuggene*, get away!"

The chicken tore out of my arms, clattered into Reb Leser's domain, noisily flew onto the shelf where the tin plates and bowls were kept and knocked them all down, and then ducked on top of Reb Leser's head, and left him a souvenir of her brief visit.

The pupils were all laughing and pointing at the Rebbe's head. Scolding and cursing loudly, Reb Lesser swore to his helpmate that he would slaughter all her chickens. Our fearless Rebbetzin argued back, arms outspread. Out in the alley many spectators arrived to peer in the windows, and some came near to getting involved in the lengthy domestic fight.

That evening I had a lot to report to my Nana.

When Reb Leser fell silent before his wife, he did so with the air of a man whose dignity was unassailable. To this he was fully entitled: in his own schoolroom, in his neighborhood and even on the peninsula across the lake, Reb Leser was a very popular man. They came to Reb Leser, the *melamed*, whenever a child was sick. He was a healer who knew how to drive away the evil eye. He would take a piece of the patient's clothing—say, a stocking or a shirt—whisper a secret word and spit on it three times.

If you had a toothache, Reb Leser would go out into the moonlight with you, and at midnight sharp he would stroke your right cheek, then your left, all the while whispering magic words.

For severe backache, you stretched out on the floor. Reb Leser—the firstborn—stood on your back for a moment and you were cured!

People who wanted to buy a cow were convinced that she would give more milk if Reb Leser had participated in the lengthy process of haggling for her.

But these were minor sources of his income—the *shadchan* business [matchmaking] brought in much more! He conducted this business between *minkha* and *maariv* at the end of the Sabbath, when Jews had rested for 24 hours and were in a good mood. He made almost as much from the *shadchan* business as from the *kheder*, with the added advantage that a *shidduch* was usually accompanied by a glass of whiskey. Maybe it was good that Reb Leser had so little time to devote to this sort of thing!

I was soon familiar with the world of the *kheder* and was also on good terms with all the neighbors there. My special favorite person was the shul-knocker, a haggard, bent little man with a greenish-yellow goat face and dull goat's eyes filled with anguish. He seemed to suffer from a whooping cough all his life. When the *kheder* children saw him in the street, we ran up to him and yelled into his face, "In shul! In shul!" and accompanied him along his way. It was his job to appear in the street near the shul, morning and evening, and cry out, "In shul! In shul!" to call the community together for prayers. Then he would dig his fists into his sides and cough. For a long time he couldn't get his breath.

The shul-knocker had another job: On Friday afternoons he ran to the Jewish merchants to remind them to close before the Sabbath. And he roused the community for *slikhes* on the mornings between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

After the Rebbetzin screamed at me about the hen I became soured about life inside the *kheder*, and I started to concentrate on life in the alley. I became excellent at games: the *zeichenspiel* (which used a pair of bone dice), the nut game, and the pin game, paired and unpaired. One of my friends was very good at the pin game, and made me quite envious: She could hold a lot of straight pins under her tongue at once and talk at the same time.

I am now 70 years old, but I remember these simple games vividly—there were many of them. We played so much at our *kheder*, actually, that we often forgot the real reason that we were even there. □

The Rebbetzin Feige operated a number of cottage industries: she baked a special honey cake to drive out worms, she sold pupils cooked peas and beans, and she tended a few chickens.

POSTSCRIPT: Pauline Wengeroff's autobiography, *Memoirs of a Grandmother* (from which this early *kheder* story is excerpted), published in 1913 in Germany, goes on to document Wengeroff's family's religious life in an increasingly assimilated and complicated Jewish world.

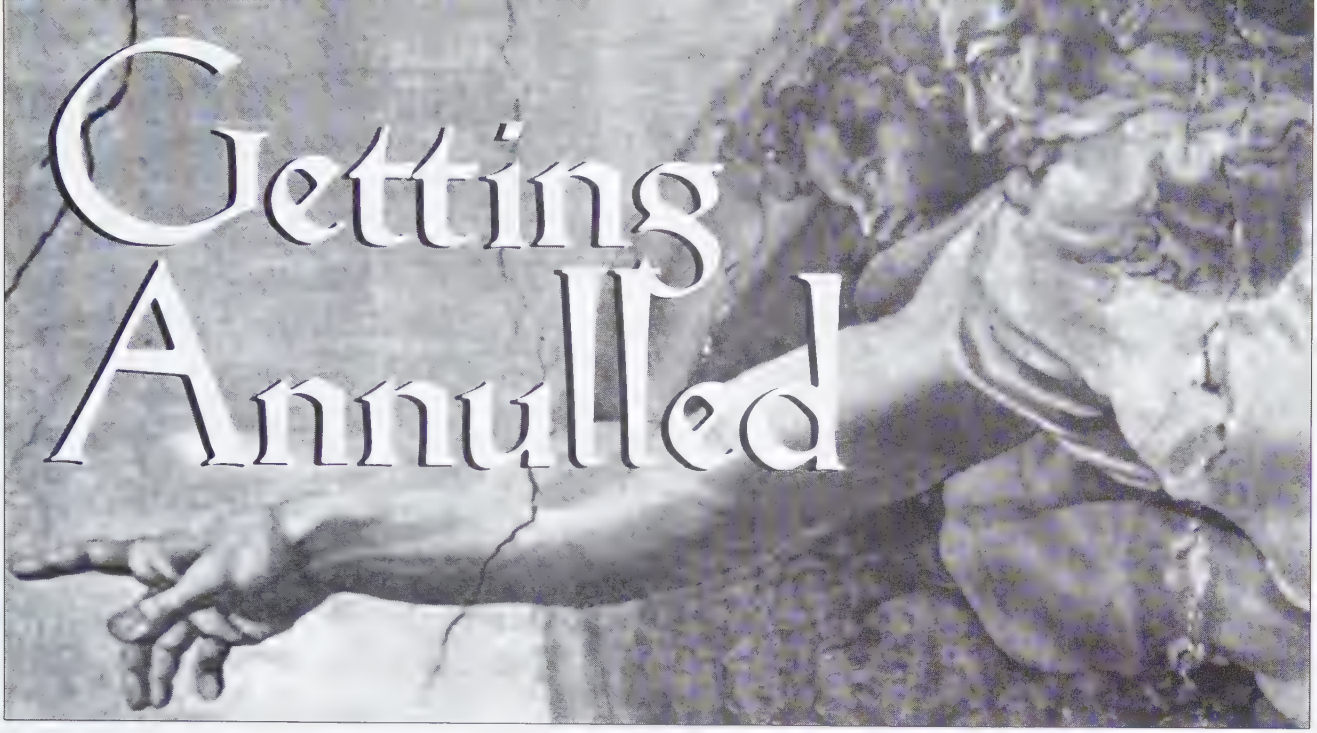
Wengeroff's mother—Mrs. Epstein—pious and Orthodox, becomes a do-or-die fighter in the battle (just beginning to rage in many Jewish homes) against the Enlightenment. In the early chapters of Wengeroff's autobiography we see Mrs. Epstein taking enormous pleasure in watching her teenage sons-in-law study Talmud every afternoon in the Epstein's bustling, cultured, meticulously observant home. Even when the boys' father-in-law was away on business—the sons-in-law studied. Later in the book, however, Mrs. Epstein one day sidles up closer to hear the boys' learned disputation, and she comes away horrified, her heart as good as stabbed: They have hidden the poems of Schiller under their Talmud folios, and are arguing about the interpretation of secular poetry!

The inevitable drift away from the Judaism that has been the Epstein family's whole beloved life for centuries—that sets its rhythms and gives it its values and center—has crept into Mrs. Epstein's very household. Over time, Pauline Wengeroff also—happy in an arranged marriage, modestly wearing a *shaytl*—comes, like her mother before her, to curse the Enlightenment.

Wengeroff's full memoir turns out to unveil the story of the slow erosion of Jewish learning and values that occurs under the author's own eyes. As young Jews pass the entrance exams to universities at the top of their classes—only to be refused admission, over and over, because they are Jews—many finally succumb to baptism, which allows all doors to open to them at once.

By the end of Wengeroff's autobiography it becomes clear that the author's grandchildren–and some of her children–are Christian. The author blames herself—not the Enlightenment (or her husband or children)—for this death rattle of traditional Judaism which occurs between her childhood and her old age.

Henny Wenkart is the editor of the anthology Sarah's Daughters Sing, *and of the* Jewish Women's Literary Annual.



Getting Annulled

The Long Arm of the Roman Catholic Church Reaches into Jewish Marriages

by Terese Loeb Kreuzer

The letter from the Archdiocese of San Francisco arrived on Halloween. "What is this?" I thought. "A joke? A costume party?" I was hurt and angry. How could something so absurd get to me like that?

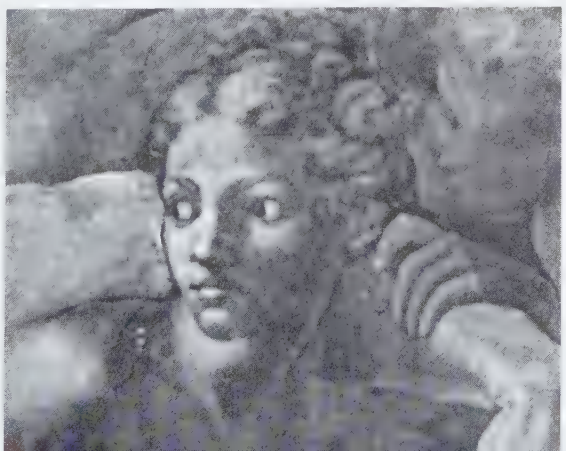
The letter informed me that my "former spouse has requested this tribunal to investigate your former marriage to establish whether or not it is possible for the Catholic Church to issue a declaration of canonical nullity. Since you are a party to this marriage, the Church insists that your dignity and rights as an individual be safeguarded."

"How considerate," I thought, wondering why the Catholic Church had any interest in—or any jurisdiction over—a marriage that occurred years ago between two Jews.

The letter explained everything. The Church was not concerned with determining "guilt or responsibility for the breakup of your marriage," but only with "determining whether or not you and your former spouse entered your marriage with the intentions, motives and capabilities of establishing the type of union which the Church believes marriage to be." If we didn't meet this standard, then the marriage could be annulled and either one of us would be free to marry in the Catholic Church. ("Oh, good," I thought.) The annulment would have no civil consequences and the legitimacy of children would not be affected in any way.

I was amazed. My former husband, a physicist, had always expressed skepticism about the practices of all organized religion. We were married by a Jewish judge who, at our request, pronounced a Hebrew blessing over us after he finished the legal part of the ceremony. Could the man I once knew fairly well have changed so much?

The letter invited me to participate in the "gathering of evidence," if I wished, or, if I preferred not to involve myself, then the proceedings would go forward without me. I could "participate" either by completing a written marital history (suggested topics enclosed), or by arranging for a priest from the Archdiocese to take my deposition over the telephone. The suggested ground for the annulment was a "defect in consent." I was invited to call the Archdiocese if I had any questions.



I turned to the list of topics. The Church wanted to know about my family background, our courtship (how did we meet? what were our attitudes toward marriage and children? what did our parents think about our engagement? etc.), our wedding and honeymoon (nerves? fears? any uneasiness?), our

married life (interests, goals, friends, leisure activities, finances, drug or alcohol abuse, physical, emotional or psychological mistreatment, infidelity, etc. etc.), the final separation, and whether there were other witnesses that the Tribunal could contact for further information.

After I got over my initial shock, I called several of my Catholic friends to ask them what they knew about annulments. "Save your breath," they advised me. "Most of them go through. Nothing you say will make any difference."

Nevertheless, I felt violated that these strangers—most of them men with values and experiences radically different from my own—should know some of the most intimate circumstances of my life and should dare to sit in judgment.

"I felt violated that these strangers—men with values and experiences radically different from my own—should know the most intimate circumstances of my life, and should dare to sit in judgment."

The truth. They wanted the truth? I would tell them the truth. I reached up to a high shelf in my closet and pulled out a frayed box of letters. Once, my apartment had burned down, and some of the letters were smoke stained. I had moved many times since then, but, always, had carried them with me. I reread them and began to write:

To the Tribunal of the Archdiocese of San Francisco...

You have asked me to provide you with detailed information about events that happened more than 30 years ago so that you can determine whether you can annul my marriage on the grounds of a 'defect in consent.'

I am not a Catholic, so my understanding of church law and of the church's rules of evidence is limited.... It is very hard to remember accurately what happened in the recent past, much less 30 years ago. However, I have several dozen letters that my husband and I wrote to each other at various times between 1958 and 1961 (prior to our marriage in 1962). I believe that these letters leave no doubt that we loved each other, that the marriage was not the result of coercion or threats, and that we were capable of understanding what we were doing.... Many of these letters are five or six pages long. They deal with events and people in our lives as well as with philosophy, science, religion, literature, and our ideas about love, sex and family. I have enclosed excerpts that seem relevant to the issues that you are examining.

I worked on this document for days and finally sent it off. Seven months later, another letter arrived from the Archdiocese. The "defect in consent" had become problematic, it seemed. Now, they wrote, the grounds were "relative incapacity to assume and fulfill the essential obligations of marriage." My friends were right—nothing I said had made any difference. My marriage had been annulled.

The number of annulments granted by the Roman Catholic Church in the United States has gone up from 338 a year in 1968 to around 50,000 a year today. According to Time magazine (August 16, 1993), U.S. annulments represent 75 percent of all annulments granted annually. In the old days, annulments could only be obtained for extreme reasons such as insanity, impotence, bigamy or fraud. Today, most American annulments are granted for "psychological" reasons, which, according to Father Patrick Cogan, executive director of the Canon Law Society of America (a national professional organization of canon lawyers), means that "the person lacks the capacity or ability to validly exchange consent with a partner because he or she lacked the required level of judgment and maturity to uphold the marital obligations."

In order to determine a person's psychological condition at the time of the marriage, many tribunals have the testimony in the case reviewed by a psychological expert. Sometimes that person is a staff psychologist, employed by the Archdiocese. Sometimes outside consultants are called in. Their evaluation may be based on the written testimony of the participants or on information that was gathered in face-to-face or telephone interviews.

Given the fact that psychology is not a black-and-white matter, I wonder whether any marriage that ended in divorce could, by definition, also be annulled.

"That question is certainly raised," says Father Cogan. "Given the broader grounds for annulment, are many marriages vulnerable?—and I think that is a tightrope that the judge has to walk to make sure that we're not labeling all these broken marriages and saying that there was a psychological incapacity at the time of marriage. Of course, this is not a foolproof process."

According to Father Cogan, 90 percent of the marriages that are reviewed by a Tribunal are found to be invalid. "See, this whole tribunal system is designed to uphold a very important Catholic doctrine, that is, the indissolubility of marriage. The marriage is permanent. Therefore, if we bind people to that principle—meaning no divorce—at the same time, we also have a responsibility to be able to recognize situations where people are not validly married so that they are not burdened unjustly by a principle that does not apply to them."

I translate this to mean that the Catholic Church has painted itself into a corner by having an inflexible doctrine that's pretty hard to sustain in the 20th century, so it finds a way to wiggle out. The only party that isn't satisfied when it's all over is likely to be the ex-spouse–and there are more and more Jewish women who are these ex-spouses–who objects to having an important part of his or her past obliterated. But he or she seems to be the most expendable participant in this drama.

Not Where I'm Coming From

Sheryl Asch, the granddaughter of a rabbi, was married in a traditional Jewish ceremony, and for 23 years, she and her husband maintained a traditional Jewish home. They were active members of a synagogue, their two sons celebrated their bar mitzvahs—and when they divorced, they also obtained a *get* (a religious Jewish divorce). So she was stunned, appalled and furious when her ex-husband sought to have their marriage annulled so that he could re-marry in the Catholic Church.

"I was brought up in a very Orthodox home," she says, "so this really hit me hard when it came, and my husband—my ex-husband—knows that. The timing was so unbelievable. When I got the letter, I thought it was a joke. They [the Archdiocese] kept saying to me in all the letters, 'if you don't want to participate, that's O.K.' and I kept saying to them, 'I don't want you to do it!'

"What surprised me more than anything else is that when I tried to get Jewish leaders to voice their opinion or to help me in some way, some of them said, 'Don't worry about it! It really doesn't mean anything.' Well, that's true in theory, but it's just that I feel that somebody comes into my religion and my life and, you know, just takes my marriage and destroys it in the name of the Catholic Church...I don't really think that that's nothing. Shouldn't we, as a Jewish community, do something about that?

"One of the priests here in Baltimore compared my *get* to a Catholic annulment. Well, that day I went wild because that is not so. A *get* means that there was a marriage, it was recognized, and the marriage is over and it gives you the freedom to go on with your life and to remarry in your religion—but it doesn't say the marriage never happened. It's like a passage. It's really a very interesting ceremony, and I think if more women realized that, they would get one. It has nothing at all to do with the Catholic annulment. You don't have to prove that anybody is bad or wrong or crazy or anything like that. Although it was a very sad ceremony, it really put closure on a part of my life.

"This priest started quoting me canon laws. Well, that's not my thing. They can do whatever they want with their laws and their sacraments. That's not where I'm coming from."

Pope Jokes

Ken Bass, a Reform Jew who had been married for the first time in a synagogue, initiated proceedings to annul his marriage to his first wife, Sharon, so that he could marry his Catholic second wife, Maria, in the Church. He and Sharon were married for more than five years and share joint custody of their two children.

"The whole annulment process is pretty strange stuff," he says. "You give your whole life story, or at least the life story of your disastrous first marriage. You know, they have this fiction that the Pope himself is looking at this. They say it requires the Pope's approval. It made Maria cringe a little bit, but then we started making Pope jokes. The Pope now knows all the seedy stuff that happened to me.

"It was important to Maria and to her parents that I get an annulment. Sharon's reaction? She was very helpful. We did not have a very good marriage, but we had an almost locally legendary divorce."

Inviting me to hang on for a second while he gets his annulment folder, Ken reconstructs the whole process from the day in January 1991 when he sent $50 to the Metropolitan Tribunal in Boston to get the ball rolling. (Annulments generally cost between $500 and $1000 to obtain, depending on where they take place.) In February, Ken and Maria went to the Tribunal office and filled out a number of forms. Ken needed to get three character references, and his parents had to be interviewed and fill out a form swearing that he had never been baptized. The Tribunal also wanted to hear from any counselor, psychologist or psychiatrist that either Ken or Sharon had seen before, during or after the marriage.

"They wanted me to describe the entire marriage," Ken says. "They said 12 to 15 pages should be sufficient to describe my entire personal and marital history including my attitude toward sex and use of sex in dating. It was strange because you didn't want to put yourself in too positive a light because if you look too good, how we can we allow this to be dissolved if you were totally responsible? But you also didn't want to make it look too sleazy. After all, the Pope is going to read this!

"It took me months to fill out the papers and answer all their questions, including why I thought the marriage failed. It was not one of those things that I was thrilled about looking at. It was painful enough when I went through it, and I really had no great desire to dredge it all up. My past behavior made me cringe. I like to think of myself as someone who's pretty intelligent, but when I had to look at things I had done, I certainly didn't look like someone who was behaving very intelligently at all.

"The annulment came through in November or December, and Maria and I got married as soon as we could after that."

> "One of the priests compared my *get* to a Catholic annulment. Well, that day I went wild. A *get* gives you the freedom to go on with your life and remarry in your religion. It *doesn't* say your marriage never happened."

Like Believing in Santa Claus

Ken said that Sharon, his first wife, was "helpful" throughout the annulment process, but, unbeknownst to him, at some cost. "My marriage was *not* annulled," she says with

great feeling. "If they want to call it annulled because they're Catholic, that's fine—but I got divorced. My divorce was legal. This wasn't legal.

"The only way that my ex-husband could get married in the Church—that his wife could get married in the Church—was for the Church to decide that our marriage—or his marriage to me—was not really a marriage, and since I don't believe in the Catholic Church and I'm Jewish, I only did this so that the Church can think whatever they want to think. As far as I'm concerned, it's like believing in Santa Claus. It doesn't mean a thing. The judges on these tribunals aren't married or anything, and they probably don't have a clear understanding of what it's like—and yet they're the ones passing judgment. It's like they're living in a dream world and they're trying to pretend something just to fit it into their view of what marriage is. It doesn't make any sense. I felt it was stupid, frankly. Really stupid."

"When it's all over, the only party that isn't satisfied is the ex-spouse—who objects (expendably) to having an important part of her past obliterated."

"Did you have any feelings around the word 'annulment?' " I ask her.

"Yeh. I didn't like it," she replies. "Because of the children. It seemed to me that if you had a marriage annulled, it means that the marriage didn't exist. If the marriage didn't exist, what does that make the children? So it's kind of an insult. I don't think Ken realized that I felt that way. It was an imposition, but I did it for him, and that was fine. We have an interesting relationship. We get along well—and I don't want to do anything that would be bad for him, and I knew he wanted to get married. They kept asking me if I was baptized or if my children were baptized. It's such hypocrisy that Ken and Maria couldn't get married in the Catholic Church unless he was never married. Now, come on. We've got two kids. We were married—and now they're going to pretend like he wasn't married? They're going to annul it? If you were a rational person and you thought about this, you would think, I don't understand this. What is this? Why do I have to do this? But Ken did it because Maria believes in it."

"Did you know that Ken had to describe every facet of your marriage in detail?" I ask.

"No," she replies. "I guess he was sparing me. I'm sure he didn't like that. It probably was very painful for him to relive it. I feel bad for him—and I'm sure his wife wouldn't have wanted him to go through that unless it was really important to her. She's not like that. She's really, really nice.

"There are certain things you don't tell people, and there are certain things you don't want to talk about," she adds..

Thrice Divorced, Once Annulled

Sarah Samuels came from a Reform family; her husband's family was Conservative. They married in 1965 in a Reform ceremony. After their son was born in 1973, both she and her husband joined a Reconstructionist synagogue. In 1979 and 1980, they divorced, first with an Orthodox *get*, then with a civil proceeding, and finally with an egalitarian, Reconstructionist ceremony. Not long afterwards, Sarah received papers from the Archdiocese of Wisconsin informing her that her former husband had initiated proceedings to have their marriage annulled.

"At the time of the Orthodox *get*," she says, "our civil divorce was in the works. Since my husband was leaving town, the Orthodox Bet Din agreed to do it even though the civil divorce hadn't yet come through."

Sarah obtained the *get* because she thought that "down the line," she might need one if she wanted to marry someone who was Orthodox. To her, it felt like "observing the past from the outside, observing history. It wasn't meaningful in the sense that we believed in it, but we were treated well by the rabbis who performed the *get*."

As far as the civil divorce, she says, "I felt the marriage was over. It was just a legality. He had already left town. I signed some papers on my lunch hour. Afterwards, I had an ice cream cone. It was something that had to be done."

Nevertheless, Sarah still felt that she hadn't done anything egalitarian or active to symbolize, Jewishly, the end of the marriage. "The Orthodox *get* was handed to me," she says. "I wanted to do something ceremonially that had meaning for me."

That moment came for her in a Reconstructionist ceremony when two documents of commitment were drawn up and cut up. She and her husband, in absentia, granted each other a divorce. "I participated and had something to do with it," she says.

She had nothing to do, however, with what happened next. A few months later, her former husband told her that he was going to remarry and needed to have their marriage annulled. Relatively calm and dispassionate as she described her marital history up to that point, her voice takes on an edge as she describes the annulment.

"The Archdiocese asked me to fill out a questionnaire," she says. "I thought it was ridiculous. I thought it was insulting that they would say this marriage—which lasted 15 years—would be considered null and void. I asked my friend, a former nun, about it, and she said that she had never heard of annulling a Jewish marriage, and her priest had not heard of it either. I called and talked with someone in the Archdiocese where my former husband had moved. They told me that they weren't questioning that there had been a valid civil marriage and said that an annulment would have no impact on the legitimacy of our son. My feeling was that since they were going to do it anyway, I wanted

continued on page 18

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continued from page 16

them to know my views on things. I undoubtedly gave them more information than they wanted. I told them about the affair my husband had with the woman he later married—and divorced. He is now married to his third wife.

"I STILL didn't understand why they felt they needed to do it. It seemed from another world. It didn't seem relevant. My Catholic friend was upset that I was upset. My feeling was that my husband and I had a marriage and it was valid when it took place. Our marriage certainly was entered into knowingly. They were finding a loophole. I felt puzzlement, skepticism and anger.

"Why did they make us go through that ordeal?"

I listen to these voices and I listen to my own heart. The annulment process was painful and intrusive, and as Sarah Samuels told me, something we didn't "need, ask for or want." As Jews, it meant nothing to us symbolically or practically, and it dredged up many sad memories.

The very word—annulment—denied our past. Each of us felt that our marriages existed, were valid, were entered into with the best of intentions, but for various reasons, didn't work out. The idea that these marriages had never really existed was not only absurd but also cruel.

The Church seems to have put us through this exercise for its own reasons, in order to permit Catholics to remarry within its precincts. Despite repeated protestations of concern for us, who neither believed in nor understood their methods, we were bit players in this pageant, left to deal with our feelings of confusion and impotence as best we could.

If this annulment business was a forgone conclusion, it was a pretty elaborate charade. If it was a search for the truth, it was grossly deficient in its methods. Even the premise that there might be a clear-cut "truth" that could be apprehended by tribunals and their "experts" seemed a fiction.

As my former husband wrote to me when he was 19 and I was 17, in one of those letters that I forwarded to the Archdiocese: "We may often catch a glimpse of a truth, but when we try to set it into words, we find that all attempts lead to such restrictions that we lose the truth. Not only is it lost to others, but to ourselves...."

I wrote back. "When we agree that something is 'true,' we do so for our own convenience...Man's imperfect perception apparatus has made it necessary for him to try to distinguish the real from the dream, and to affix labels...."

How true. □

Terese Loeb Kreuzer's articles have appeared in The New York Times, New York Newsday, The Boston Herald, and Caribbean Travel & Life. She is also a video producer and a graphic designer.

* Some names have been changed to protect the privacy of the people involved.

A Foretaste of the Prayer Book to Come

Excerpts from Marcia Falk's Complete Alternative Feminist Prayer Book (With Prayers Re-Written in Both English *and* Hebrew)

This coming winter will see the publication of Marcia Falk's long-awaited alternative prayer book, *The Book of Blessings* [HarperSanFrancisco] which contains, in Falk's words, "Everything a non-Orthodox Jew (male or female) is going to need for synagogue and home celebration of daily life, the Sabbath and Rosh Hodesh." This revolutionary *siddur*, which rewrites both English *and* Hebrew (and which Falk has been working on for 13 years) is, actually, the first volume of five. Falk's intention is to write future prayer books for the High Holidays, the major festivals, other holidays and the life cycle.

A Hebrew scholar, linguist and lyric poet, Falk's informal 'prayer book committee' consisted of what she describes as "three hundred talented friends who are Bible and Talmud scholars, philosophers, poets, literary critics and theologians. The privilege of writing this *siddur* is that I've gotten to dialogue with some of the best minds in modern Judaism," she says. "My prayer book is not one person's isolated effort. It represents an interaction between me and the Jewish community—its resources, what it needs and wants."

DANIELE IMPERIALE

In these pages LILITH previews five prayers—a foretaste of the prayer book to come:

◆ a personal version of the **Sh'ma** to be recited at bedtime;

◆ a **bedtime blessing** following the Sh'ma which is, in Falk's words, "a way to awaken gratitude;"

◆ **Putting on the Prayer Shawl**, the first blessing that is uttered in the morning service, in which "directing the heart" (that is, focusing one's attention on the words one is saying) is brought explicitly to the foreground;

◆ a **prayer for two people** for use at home on Friday evenings (in place of "A Woman of Valor," which some women find patronizing), representing, in Falk's words, "a pause to appreciate others with whom we share our lives." Falk's Hebrew version has grammatically correct alternatives for same-sex as well as opposite-sex couples;

◆ "**Humble Hour**," a poem by the Yiddish poet Malka Heifetz Tussman, to be recited as one of the Psalms of Creation at the Friday evening service. Instead of the traditional Psalms of Creation, which mainly praise the Creator, Falk here substitutes a suite of poetry by Jewish women (in Hebrew, Yiddish and English) that celebrates creation itself, and humans' empathic connection with the natural world.

As in Falk's *The Song of Songs: A New Translation and Interpretation* [HarperSan Francisco, 1990], *The Book of Blessings* includes the author's exhaustive scholarly appendices on each prayer, highlighting the linguistic, theological, historical and biblical material that informed each of her literary choices.

"I brought fear and trembling to rewriting these prayers," explains Falk, "especially to rewriting something like the Sh'ma. I worried—How *dare* I rewrite a prayer that's equated with, in myth or fact, centuries of martyrdom? But if we take our liturgy seriously, then this is what we must do: Say prayers that express what we mean, instead of reciting prayers that express what we don't mean.

"In *The Book of Blessings* I am attempting to articulate an authentic theology. My experience of life does not take the form of patriarchal images, so I haven't needed a sexist language. If I needed to talk to a man, then I would need a male image. But theology isn't about talking to a male or a female; it's about getting in touch with the potential for the sacred in our lives."

—Rabbi Susan Schnur

AT BEDTIME

Sh'ma: Personal Declaration of Faith

Hear, O Israel—
The divine abounds everywhere
and swells in everything;
the many are One.

* * *

Loving life
and its mysterious source
with all my heart
and all my spirit,
all my senses and strength,
I take upon myself
and into myself
these promises:
to care for the earth
and those who live upon it,
to pursue justice and peace,
to love kindness and compassion.
I will teach this to our children
throughout the passage of the day–
as I dwell in my home
and as I go on my journeys,
from the time I rise
until I fall asleep.
And may my actions
be faithful to my words
that our children's children
may live to know:
Truth and kindness
have embraced,
peace and justice have kissed
and are one.

שְׁמַע, יִשְׂרָאֵל--
לָאֱלֹהוּת אַלְפֵי פָנִים,
מְלֹא עוֹלָם שְׁכִינָתָה,
רִבּוּי פָנֶיהָ אֶחָד.

***

אֹהַב אֶת־הַחַיִּים
וְאֶת עֵין הַחַיִּים
בְּכָל־לְבָבִי וּבְכָל־נַפְשִׁי
וּבְכָל־מְאֹדִי.
יְהִיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה
בִּלְבָבִי וּבְקִרְבִּי:
שְׁמִירַת אֶרֶץ וְיוֹשְׁבֶיהָ,
רְדִיפַת צֶדֶק וְשָׁלוֹם,
אַהֲבַת חֶסֶד וְרַחֲמִים.
אֲשַׁנְּנֵם
לְבָנוֹתֵינוּ וּלְבָנֵינוּ
וְאֲדַבֵּר בָּם
בְּשִׁבְתִּי בְּבֵיתִי,
בְּלֶכְתִּי בַדֶּרֶךְ,
בְּשָׁכְבִּי וּבְקוּמִי.
וְיִהְיוּ מַעֲשַׁי
נֶאֱמָנִים לִדְבָרַי,
לְמַעַן יֵדְעוּ דּוֹר אַחֲרוֹן,
בָּנוֹת וּבָנִים יִוָּלֵדוּ:
חֶסֶד וֶאֱמֶת נִפְגָּשׁוּ,
צֶדֶק וְשָׁלוֹם נָשָׁקוּ.

Sh'ma, yisra'eyl—/la'elohut alfey panim/ m'lo olam sh'khinatah/ ribui panéha eḥad./ *** /Ohav et-haḥayim /v'eyt eyn haḥayim/ b'khol-l'vavi uvkhol-nafshi/ uvkhol-m'odi./ Yihyu had'varim ha'eyleh/ bilvavi uvkirbi:/ sh'mirat éretz v'yosh'véha/ r'difat tzédek v'shalom/ ahavat ḥesed v'raḥamim./ Ashan'neym/ livnotéynu ulvanéynu/ va'adabeyr bam/ b'shivti b'veyti/ b'lekhti badérekh/ b'shokhbi uvkumi./ V'yihyu ma'asay/ ne'emanim lid'varay/ l'ma'an yeyd'u dor aḥaron/ banot uvanim yivaléydu:/ ḥesed ve'emet nifgáshu/ tzédek v'shalom nasháku.

AT BEDTIME

Blessing before Going to Sleep

Sleep descending,
on my lids,
on my limbs,

I call to mind
the gifts
of the day—

the gift
of this day—
and give thanks.

חֶבְלֵי שֵׁנָה עַל עֵינַי
וּתְנוּמָה עַל עַפְעַפַּי,

מְלְאָה נַפְשִׁי הוֹדָיָה
עַל מַתְּנוֹת הַיּוֹם,

מְלְאָה נַפְשִׁי הוֹדָיָה
עַל מַתַּת הַיּוֹם.

Ḥevley sheynah al eynay/ utnumah al af'apay/ mal'ah nafshi hodayah/ al mat'not hayom/ mal'ah nafshi hodayah/ al matat hayom.

IN THE MORNING

Putting on the Prayer Shawl

Recalling the generations,
I wrap myself
in the *talit*.

May my mind be clear,
my spirit open
as I envelop myself in prayer.

הִנְנִי מִתְעַטֶּפֶת (מִתְעַטֵּף)
בְּטַלִּית שֶׁל צִיצִית
כְּדֵי לִזְכֹּר וְלִשְׁמֹר
אֶת מְסֹרֶת הַדּוֹרוֹת
וּכְדֵי לְכַוֵּן
אֶת לִבִּי.

יִפְתַּח לִבִּי,
תִּתְכּוֹנַן נַפְשִׁי
בְּהִתְעַטְּפִי בְּטַלִּית.

Hin'ni mit'atéfet (females)/ mit'ateyf (males)/ b'talit shel tzitz-it/ k'dey lizkor v'lishmor/ et masóret hadorot/ ukhdey l'khaveyn/ et libi./ Yipataḥ libi/ titkoneyn nafshi/ b'hit'at'fi batalit.

ON SHABBAT EVENING AT HOME

Blessing the Beloved

Couples may choose from the three Hebrew versions of this dialogue (for a man and a woman, for two women, and for two men).

One partner:
How fine
your are, my love,
how fine you are.
The other partner:
How fine
are you, my love,
what joy is ours.
Together:
Of all pleasure,
how sweet
is the taste of love.

A woman to a woman:
הִנָּךְ יָפָה, דּוֹדִי,
הִנָּךְ יָפָה.
The woman responds:
הִנָּךְ יָפָה, דּוֹדִי,
אַף נָעִים.
Together:
מַהְיָפִית
וּמַהְנָעֲמְתְּ,
אַהֲבָה בְּתַעֲנוּגִים.

A man to a man:
הִנָּךְ יָפָה, רַעְיָתִי,
הִנָּךְ יָפָה.
The man responds:
הִנָּךְ יָפָה, רַעְיָתִי,
אַף נָעִימָה.
Together:
מַהְיָפִית
וּמַהְנָעֲמְתְּ,
אַהֲבָה בְּתַעֲנוּגִים.

A man to a woman:
הִנָּךְ יָפָה, רַעְיָתִי,
הִנָּךְ יָפָה.
The woman responds:
הִנָּךְ יָפָה, דּוֹדִי,
אַף נָעִים.
Together:
מַהְיָפִית
וּמַהְנָעֲמְתְּ,
אַהֲבָה בְּתַעֲנוּגִים.

A man to a woman: Hinakh yafah, ra'yati/ hinakh yafah.
The woman responds: Hin'kha yafeh, dodi/ af na'im.
Together: Mah-yafit/ umah-na'amt/ ahavah bata'anugim.

A man to a man: Hinakh yafah, ra'yati/ hinakh yafah.
The man responds: Hinakh yafah, ra'yati/ af n'imah.
Together: Mah-yafit/ umah-na'amt/ ahavah bata'anugim.

A woman to a woman: Hin'kha yafeh, dodi/ hin'kha yafeh.
The woman responds: Hin'kha yafeh, dodi/ af na'im.
Together: Mah-yafit/ umah-na'amt/ ahavah bata'anugim.

A SHABBAT EVENING PSALM OF CREATION

Humble Hour

My clear, humble hour–
when I carried a bundle of straw
for the newborn calf
and bent down
and spread the straw
beneath her quivering wetness,
my trembling hand playing
on the little chin
as I put two fingers
into her hot mouth
and cried
a sweet, satisfying cry
in the face of the calf
on Sheva's farm
in the village of Orot.

–Malka Heifetz Tussman
(translation M. F.)

מײַן לויטערע, הכנעהדיקע שעה,
וועַן כ'האָב אַ בינטל שטרוי געבראַכט צו טראָגן
פֿאַר אַ קעלבעלע אַ נײַ געבאָרן
און אײַנגעבויגן זיך
און אויסגעשפרייט דאָס שטרוי
אונטער קעלבלס צאַפּלדיקער נאַסקייט.
ארום דער מאָרדעלע
האָט זיך אַרומגעשפּילט מײַן ציטערדיקע האַנט,
צוויי פֿינגער אים געגעבן אין זײַן היסן מויל
און
איך האָב געווײַנט,
געשמאַק אַזוי געווײַנט אין פּנים פֿונעם קעלבל
אין משק "שבֿע" פֿון מושבֿ "אורות".

Breast cancer touches the lives of many Jewish women. Here LILITH looks at this through three Jewish ceremonies: a *bris*; a *mikveh* immersion; and a Rosh Hodesh group's ritual. In these pieces we ask ourselves: How can we best heal? How can we help our friend to heal? How do we recruit Judaism to help *us?*

What God Takes: *Bris* and Mastectomy

by Leslie What

It is your eighth day of life and the day of your *brit milah*, the covenant between every Jewish boy and his Creator. I lean against the wall like a broken fixture, propped up on either side by my best friends, Miriam and Judith.

Your father holds you in a football grip and gazes into your sleepy eyes. If I look at you I'll cry. Instead I look at Judith, who squeezes my hand.

On the dining-room table are two unlit candles, a prayer book, a silver goblet. A small steel tray holds surgical instruments, covered under a sterile drape.

There was no equivalent tradition for your sister Leah. Now it has become fashionable to hold naming ceremonies for girls, but we didn't think of it ten years ago, and I'm sorry. Leah, across the room, seems hurt; she's jealous of the gifts and attention you're receiving. You fuss, perhaps because the men are conversing so close to you. I ache at the sound of your voice, and bring my arms up to hug across my chest.

I remember those first few weeks after Leah's birth when I was a reservoir for the waters of life. Leah squalled and my body rained milk. Leah squalled and I gave myself to her until her suckling brought physical release for us both. I can't give you that, my son, because of the mastectomy. I do have feeling in my chest: of fullness, of tension, of something pent up inside. Perhaps a kind of essence of mother's milk flows through my veins, if not my breasts. Perhaps it is nothing of the sort, only the phantom pain of an amputee who seeks to give a greater meaning to her suffering.

"What name have you given this child?" the mohel asks formally.

"Israel," your father answers—meaning, 'he who struggles with God.'

"That should be your name," my friend Miriam whispers and I smile. She and Judith, like me, are also in their late 30's. Judith has recently started to darken her hair, while Miriam thinks the gray has given her status that she lacked before. I've avoided looking in the mirror since my surgery, and have forgotten whether my hair has grayed or not.

Judith married young and has three daughters. Miriam waited long after graduate school and now wants desperately to have a child, but she hasn't

ILLUSTRATION BY LINDA FRICHTEL COURTESY OF HADASSAH

been able to conceive. She looks to me, as if to reassure herself that I am strong enough to go through with this.

Watching Miriam, I see how we women feel tension in our upper bodies. We hug and press our shoulders to each other, we heave our chests, we sigh. Miriam moves away and hunches over her torso, diminishing the size of her breasts. Though she knows that one has nothing to do with the other, Miriam has said to me that she would sacrifice this part of herself if that would help her become a mother.

The men, even your father, hold themselves much lower while they contemplate the inevitable. They stand with their arms at their sides, hands brushing thighs as if poised to cup their groins the moment the first cut is made.

"Circumcision is an irrational act," the mohel tells us, "performed because the Holy One has asked it of us."

My husband nods in agreement, but he is trembling and I know his mind is elsewhere. As for me, I am not sure that I agree circumcision is irrational. Perhaps it is, but no more so than the fact that I had both breasts removed when only one was infected with a marble-sized clump of cells. I allowed it because I was deemed "high risk," since my mother and a maternal aunt died young of breast cancer. There was no guarantee that a

mastectomy would cure me, yet I listened to my doctor, a mere man whose only leap of faith may have been on his eighth day when he was circumcised.

"This new life is a miracle," the mohel says, and I agree with him.

If you were planned, dear son, it was not by me. I expected to die after the surgery. The radiation and chemotherapy treatments stunted my will along with my cancer. But then I became pregnant, and once again I found strength to go on. I can't explain where that strength came from—God? love? a universal consciousness? Whatever name you call this thing that exists beyond the physical self.

"Barbaric, isn't it?" Judith, the mother of three girls, whispers, interrupting my thoughts.

"Why do you say that?" I argue, though I have often voiced Judith's line myself.

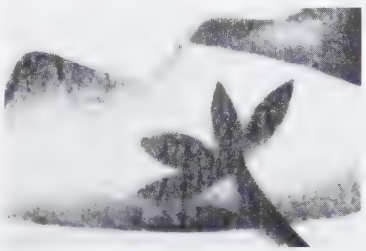
"What gives us the right?" she adds, and I hear her words as if they were an accusation, as if this ceremony were all my idea.

But you must know, little son, that *brit milah* is not a choice *we* made for you. That decision was made long ago. You will bear a scar to show the promise made to God in your name. You will be bound by this covenant to follow God's law.

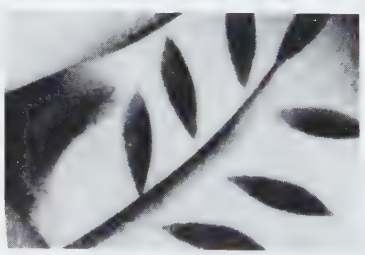
Maimonides said that circumcision was prescribed to weaken man's sex drive; Nachmanides said the covenant was a reminder—not for us—but for God, to remember us. I'm only your mother, but I say this: You will give a small piece of yourself back to God and that gift will help us all remember there is more in life than one individual's desire. There are leaps of faith.

"Abraham received the first covenant of circumcision at age 99," says the mohel. "God rewarded Abraham for his great faith, promising that Sarah would conceive their child."

When God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, how is it that his faith never faltered? Didn't he wonder why God was making him go through such pain? I try to have faith, but I can't stop worrying. I'm terrified, lamb, not knowing how badly my chemotherapy has harmed you.



"After the *bris*, I must nurse you with a bottle, for I, too, have given something back to God."



"Baruch atah...," the mohel says. He lights the candles, then dips a cotton ball into the wine and touches it to your lips.

You begin to suck lazily. It is customary to give the baby boy wine, in the hope of sweetening at least some of the pain. There is so much truth in this I tremble. I know so well how we can swallow bitterness when the promise of sweetness is offered at the same time.

"We are ready to begin." The mohel watches your father, who coughs.

I have seen this before and I know, without looking, what happens next. Soon you scream.

Moments later, the mohel wraps you tightly in a blanket, then hands you to your father, who brings you to me to calm. I hurry from the room, passing Leah, who smiles anxiously. You have suffered so much that even your own sister now has sympathy for you.

I cradle you as I carry you to the bedroom. I sit upon the bed, cooing to you, nursing you with formula until your eyelids flutter and you intermittently suckle in sleep. I must nurse you with this bottle, for I too have given something back to God.

After a while, I will allow myself tears, but now I sit holding you, stroking the incredibly soft and wrinkled skin at the base of your head. You are so warm, so alive, so precious that I feel tremendous joy and release in being near you.

I drape a clean diaper on my shoulder, and hold you so your chin rests on that shoulder, so your tummy presses against my chest. I stroke your back with my fingertips, and gently kiss the side of your head.

"It's all over now," I tell you. I want so much for that to be true. I close my eyes and speak in a whisper. "Dear God," I pray, wishing I had some concrete assurance that I was being heard.

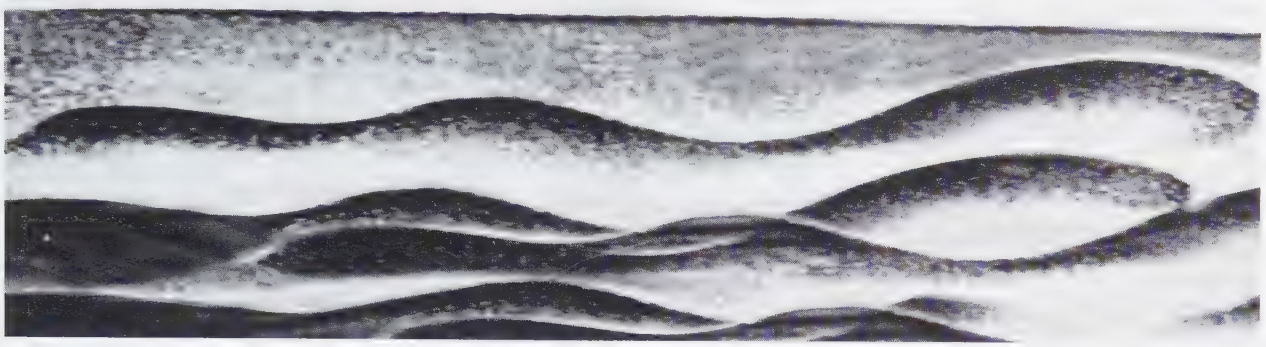
"Please, God," I say. "Please. Let this little piece you've taken today be all that you ever ask this child to give." □

Leslie What has published poetry, fiction and non-fiction in regional and national magazines such as Hysteria, Asimov's Science Fiction, Fantasy and Science Fiction, and Fugue. She lives in Eugene, Oregon.

MASTECTOMY: Twelve Months after Surgery

A Bathing Ritual for the End of Mourning

by Jerilyn Goodman



As the first anniversary of my mastectomy approached, I viewed the occasion with mixed emotions. It had been a year of challenges and discoveries, sadness, fear and fortitude. It had also been, I realized, now that it was over, twelve months of mourning. I had suffered a terrible loss, grieved that loss, and had begun to heal physically and spiritually. It was time to re-enter the world and look towards the future.

I don't remember when the idea of a mikveh immersion ceremony came to me, except that, like so many of the blessings of that year, it came when I both needed it and was open to receiving it.

The healing powers of water had played a big part in my physical recovery from the surgery. Six months before the cancer diagnosis, for reasons I'll never know, I began to swim at the Y. It was an exercise I had attempted a couple of times over the years with no real enthusiasm. Surprisingly, this time I stuck with it and, even more miraculously, began to enjoy it. I built up my strength and endurance and began to feel a sense of peace in the water. It was as if my body knew of the impending trauma and wanted to be prepared. After the surgery (and even now, almost two years later) I continued swimming a few times weekly.

In my mind, a visit to the mikveh offered a ritual cleansing from the ashes of mourning to the freshness of one reborn. It was an appealing thought, but it was only *my* thought, not the *halakhic* idea of our ancestors. Would it, I wondered, be kosher? I consulted my rabbi, Lisa Edwards, at Temple Beth Chayim Chadashim in Los Angeles. She supported me. I had yet no clue, however, as to what my ritual might actually be.

When I was young, our rabbi ended every Shabbat service with the Priestly Blessing. We would rise as a congregation; he would stand in the center of the *bima*, arms raised, and intone this most personal benediction in Hebrew and then in English: "May God bless you and keep you. May God's countenance smile upon you and be gracious unto you. And may God grant you peace. Amen." It was a blessing I could wear as I left the synagogue to face the world outside.

I realized, all these years later, that I wanted the comfort of that same blessing again. It was somehow very embarrassing for me to tell Rabbi Edwards that I wanted to be blessed. But, I reasoned finally, desperate times call for desperate measures. If you can't ask a rabbi to say a prayer on your behalf, whom can you ask?

In the days before going to the mikveh, I started to read up about its significance in *The Jewish Catalogue, The Jewish Book of Why, Miriam's Well: Rituals for Jewish Women Around the Year*, and elsewhere. I began reading the Torah, to catch up to the portion for that week (it was Genesis 35:1-36:43). Several passages jumped out at me and I wrote them in a notebook, with no obvious plan.

Besides the rabbi, a dear friend, Fran Chalin, was accompanying me to the mikveh. She had also decided to perform an immersion (in a ceremony completely separate from mine) to celebrate the birth of her first child. Several times we talked about our feelings surrounding the ritual and our expectations. She was particularly fearful that the moment would not instill in her the feelings she wanted to feel.

Hearing her voice these concerns made it easier for me to realize how important it was to let go of expectations. The mikveh would not guarantee me a life free from cancer any more than it would guarantee my friend peace of mind, but if we had no expectations, we could not be disappointed. To enter with an open heart...*dayenu.*

The night before my visit, still unsure of what I would do at the mikveh, I sat at the computer consolidating the biblical passages that had struck me. I copied the prayers—the *Sh'ma*, the blessing concerning immersion in the mikveh,

and the *Shehechiyanu*. This last prayer especially, thanking God for "allowing us to reach this day," would have particular significance as I stood in the healing waters.

I copied a brief explanation of the states of *tumah* [uncleanliness] and *taharah* [cleanliness] that exist before and after immersion. And suddenly all these passages and prayers fell into an order that would become a service.

At the mikveh the next day, I handed everyone a copy of my ceremony, and then showered and cleaned myself according to custom. Without jewelry, contact lenses, perfumes or anything that would impede the contact of my body with water, I entered the small tile-lined mikveh-room in a towel, disrobed, and went down into the water.

It was a sunken tub, about five feet square, much like any Jacuzzi at a health club, but without the jets. I walked down seven steps to stand in the shoulder-high water. The water was warm and the room quiet. Standing above me were four people—the rabbi; the "mikveh lady" Lillian Zelcer (I had invited her to participate as the 'woman who cares for all women'); my friend Fran; and her newborn, Eli. It felt unexpectedly life-affirming to have Eli there.

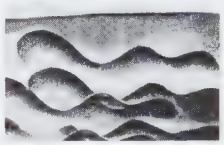
I stood, arms outstretched and legs apart, as Lillian had instructed me. Each of the three times I immersed, I curled up so that the water enveloped me completely, as it once did in the womb.

Before and after each immersion I relaxed and breathed deeply and let the water and the words of the Torah wash over me, acknowledging my struggle, welcoming God's presence, and preparing me to face the future with hope.

When it was all over, I walked outside into a magnificent late-fall day. The sky felt very close (we were on a hill), very blue. The air was really clean. It felt good and it felt right. □

Jerilyn Goodman is a 45-year-old television producer in Los Angeles.

Mikveh Ceremony



Jerilyn Goodman
Los Angeles • November 17, 1994

[To commemorate my
mastectomy of November 18, 1993,
To mark the end of a year of mourning,
And to celebrate my life ahead.]

Rabbi: *Tumah* [uncleanliness] is the result of our confrontation with the fact of our own mortality. It is the going down into darkness. *Taharah* [cleanliness] is the result of our re-affirmation of our own mortality. It is the re-entry into light. *Tumah* is evil or frightening only when there is no further life. Otherwise, *tumah* is simply part of the human cycle.

[from The Jewish Catalog]

Rabbi: Be strong and of good courage. Fear not nor be afraid. For the Lord, thy God, will not fail thee nor forsake thee.

[Joshua 1: 19]

Fran: For I am on the road on which the Lord has guided me.

[Genesis 28:16]

Lillian: I have seen a divine being face to face, yet my life has been preserved.

[Genesis 32:31]

Jerilyn: *Sh'ma Yisra'el, Adonai Eloheynu, Adonai Echad.* Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One.

—IMMERSION—

Jerilyn: *Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheynu Yotzer ha'olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav vitzivanu al hatvilah.* Blessed art Thou, Lord our God, Creator of the world, who has made us holy with your commandments, and commanded us concerning immersion.

Fran: Rid yourselves of the alien gods in your midst, purify yourselves, and change your garments. Let us promptly go up to Bethel and I will build an altar there to the God who answered me when I was in distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone.

[Genesis 35:2, from the week's Torah portion]

[Jerilyn recites the immersion prayer a second time.]

—IMMERSION—

Jerilyn: *Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheynu Ru-ach ha'olam, shehechiyanu, v'kimanu, v'higgianu lazman ha'zeh.*

All: Blessed art Thou, Lord our God, Spirit of the world, who has kept us alive and sustained us and enabled us to reach this day.

—IMMERSION—

Rabbi: *T'var-khekh Shekhinah veh-tish-merekh. Ta'er Shekhinah paneh-hah eh-lei-ikh veh-teh-hunekh. Tisa Shekinah paneh-hah eh-lei-ikh veh-tah-sem lakh shalom.* May God bless you and protect you. May the light of God shine upon you and God's grace be with you. May God be always with you and bring you peace. AMEN. *[the Priestly Blessing, with 'Shekinah' substituted for 'Adonai'; and 'you' grammatically changed in Hebrew so that the prayer is bestowed upon a female rather than, as is traditional, upon a male]*

[Note two changes in the Hebrew prayers: The word "Creator" and later "Spirit" are substituted for the word "King."]

Helping a Friend through Breast Cancer: OUR EXPERIENCE

by Bonnie Resnick, Margy Hirsch and Sara Hoppe
on behalf of HAVURAT HALEV, Minneapolis/St. Paul.

When Margy, one of the women in our Rosh Hodesh group, shared with us that she had breast cancer and had decided on a bilateral mastectomy, our group gathered together to create a healing ceremony for her, and for *us* as well. Margy did not participate in the planning of the ceremony (she was still overwhelmed by her medical news, and was coming to terms with its implications), but the group knew that she was comforted by the fact that we were doing this for her.

Planning the mastectomy ceremony was almost as gratifying as performing the ritual itself. We met early one morning in Laurel's dining room, and we started by talking about our own connections to breast cancer, and grappling with the ways in which our mothers, mothers-in-law, sisters, aunts, friends, grandmothers and some of us ourselves had dealt with breast cancer. It was shocking just to realize the extraordinary prevalence of breast cancer in our lives.

Eventually we started to brainstorm about what we thought would be meaningful and healing for Margy. She had grown up in the High Plains of Kansas near the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, so one of us suggested the song "River" by Bill Staines that reflected these roots. Margy had mentioned in previous Rosh Hodesh celebrations that water had special meaning for her as a source of life, and so we decided to include a prayer from Penina Adelman's book, *Miriam's Well*, about how women are like rivers. As Jewish women, we wanted to elicit both women's and Judaism's healing powers. We paged through Jewish feminist prayer books and traditional *siddurim*. Shellie, a woman in the group, had brought to the meeting an English-language Jewish prayer for healing, and the group feminized it for use.

Our final composed ceremony consisted of lighting candles, singing, doing a healing meditation (led by Sara Hoppe), and reading a few poems and prayers. The latter included an excerpt from the poem "Prairie" by Carl Sandburg; the prayer "Mothers of Israel" from *On Our Spiritual Journey: A Creative Shabbat Service*, edited by Jacquelyn Tolley (published by the Women's Institute for Continuing Jewish Education); and a prayer by Elaine Starkman from *Women Speak to God: The Prayers and Poems of Jewish Women*, edited by Marcia Cohn Spiegel and Deborah Lipton Kremsdorf (also published by WICJE). We ended by singing the *Mi Shebairach* (the traditional prayer for healing), using Debbie Friedman's well-known melody.

The most moving piece of the ceremony was, of course, the part that arose unplanned.

The most moving piece of the ceremony was, of course, the part that arose unplanned. After Margy read a prayer she had written for her own healing—which was intimate, vulnerable, revealing and powerful—in which she pleaded to find the strength she would need for the crucible ahead, we all found ourselves, spontaneously, moving towards her in a circle. Some of us held her hands or touched her shoulders or arms; others reached out to her with words. We were all responding to how real and undisguised her prayer had been, and our gathering close to her was a felt response, an assurance that we would continue to reach out to her.

The evening ended with a light vegetarian meal, as we spoke of Margy's cancer and others with cancer, of children, synagogue, sexism, religion, and of our next Rosh Hodesh gathering, during which time we would return to our monthly ritual of welcoming the new moon. Laurel passed around a sheet with the dates of Margy's chemotherapy and asked everyone to select a time to bring dinner to Margy, her husband and two children. The commitment to prepare meals was important, carrying our ritual into Margy's own home, and fulfilling the mitzvah of *bikur holim* [visiting the ill].

In reflecting back on the ceremony, Margy said that it decreased her fear, that it helped her know that no matter what happened with her cancer, she wasn't going to be alone. During the ceremony, she said she felt everyone's healing energy directed at her, and she sensed herself gathering the fortitude necessary to face the long months of chemotherapy ahead. She experienced a deep kinship with the women present, she said, and with all women everywhere who have ever had cancer.

After the ritual the group felt bonded in a new way. It was difficult to leave that night, but each of us, finally, walked out the door with a sense of empowerment and mutual connection that is still with us almost two years later. □

For more information about this ritual, contact Bonnie Resnick (at 2251 Copperfield Drive, Mendota Heights, MN 55120) or Margy Hirsch (at 5717 Harriet Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55419).

FOREMOTHERS

LILITH readers: You've let us know that you particularly treasure, and find empowering, articles about Jewish foremothers—from biblical matriarchs through 20th century heroines. From time to time, therefore, we highlight such material under the banner "Foremothers." By saving these articles you'll eventually have your own Jewish "motherline" reader.

(forgotten) Our Foremother: Manya Shohat (1880-1961)

Manya Shohat, about age 55, in Palestine in the 1940's.

Utopian outlaw, indefatigable revolutionary, founder of the first kibbutz

by Shulamit Reinharz

In 1907 on the Sejera training farm in the Lower Galilee, Manya Wilbushewitz implemented a socio-economic plan on which she had been working for years. Her goal: to organize a group of Jewish workers in a way that would enable them to support themselves in agricultural labor, without exploiting anyone and without being dependent on charity. Her hope was that, if her project succeeded, it become a model for other groups of Jews in pre-State Israel (Palestine) and eventually a model for large-scale settlement and employment.

Whether or not her group at Sejera actually achieved that goal is a matter of continuous debate among historians. What is clear, however, is that Manya was the founder—both in terms of formulating the key ideas and in putting them into practice—of the kibbutz movement. For some reason her extraordinary accomplishment has become invisible, and thus Manya's role as an early Founder of the Jewish state has been unforgiveably overlooked.

Manya Wilbushewitz was born in 1880 on an estate near the town of Grodno, in Western Russia. Her father was wealthy, deeply religious, and, unlike many of his contemporaries, interested in technology. His land on the banks of the Neiman river included a grain mill that employed scores of peasants. Manya's mother was not interested in religion, and fought her husband's plan to have their sons educated as rabbis. Manya was the eighth child of this conflictual marriage. None of her older siblings remained on the estate in roles intended by either parent. Instead, they each pursued various ideological paths: joining the terrorist Social Revolutionaries, becoming a Tolstoyan peasant, emigrating as a farmer to Palestine with the *Hibbat Zion*, or obtaining professional expertise specifically to radicalize Palestine. Several eventually committed suicide when their feminist, romantic, or

social ideals disappointed them.

Manya's family mirrored the contradictions of Jewish life in late-19th century Russia. At the same time as restrictions on Jews were lifted, allowing for a certain amount of assimilation into both the educated and revolutionary Gentile groups, Jews also experienced a backlash of anti-Semitism which provoked religious retrenchment, emigration, Zionism and socialism. In her childhood, Manya first was profoundly religious and later committed to Russian peasants. At the age of 15 she ran away to the city of Minsk where, in her brother Gedaliahu's factory, she organized a strike of the 500 workers against him, protesting the excessively long work day. This was to become the first of her numerous efforts to improve the working conditions of industrial and agricultural laborers.

Exposed to a whole range of radical political groups—from Bundists to socialist Zionists to terrorist Social Democrats—Manya chose to get involved in the clandestine establishment of evening study clubs where workers were taught basic literacy, history, economics and socialism. She also traveled to the faraway Tartar region to join a relief effort which brought medical aid to peasants suffering from the drought and cholera. One consequence of the latter experience was her encounter with the "mir" or Russian communal system. On her return to Minsk she set up an urban collective. Collectives, she believed, provide "the proletariat with the means of its struggle."

Manya's political activism led to her year-long imprisonment at the hands of the Russian secret police. There, influenced by the head of the Moscow secret police, Sergei Zubatov, she seems to have switched political strategies. Upon her release, Zubatov and Manya established a political party (the Jewish Independent Labor Party) which limited itself to labor issues and did not pursue revolution. Zubatov, however, ended up abandoned by his anti-Semitic superiors as a traitor. At the same time the Russian masses were agitated into enacting the traumatic Kishinev pogroms of 1903. Manya decided to become a terrorist, because peaceful political activism was ineffective and Jews were losing their lives.

When Manya left Russia to gather funds in Berlin for her terrorist group, her brother Nahum in Palestine, fearing for his 24-year-old sister's safety, intervened with a ruse and brought Manya to Palestine. With her arrival she became one of the first members of the Second Aliyah, composed mostly of radicalized young Russians who came to Palestine between 1904 and 1914. Manya then learned that all of the members of her terrorist group back in Russia had been executed. With this tragedy in the background, she decided not to return to Russia and to commit her attention to labor issues in Palestine.

> With the 200,000 rubles, Shohat purchased revolvers which she smuggled in her clothing into Russia for Jewish defense groups. When a member of the secret police cornered her and threatened to kill her, Shohat murdered him instead, shipping his body in a trunk to a fictitious address.

On a six-week study tour of Palestine by horseback to help conduct a survey of the geography and natural resources in order to lay a foundation for industrial development, Manya was transformed into a Zionist. "I became tied to the land with a deep love, an unusual love, which filled my entire soul, mind and emotions," she wrote. "This love has remained with me

Shohat, Passover, 1892, with her siblings, two cousins, and her mother (center) in Russia. Manya sits on the floor with her arm draped over her sister's knee.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ZOHAR WILBUSH

always. It was as if a tie had been renewed between us that was 2,000 years old."

Manya's Zionism, unlike that of most Zionists of the time, had four special attributes: activism, large-scale dimensions, self-labor, and collectivism. While the World Zionist Organization wanted negotiations with world powers for a charter permitting settlement, Manya favored immediate "infiltration" of Jewish settlers ,because of the need for immediate refuge. Since the number of Jewish settlers at the time was small, Manya's plan for hundreds in the Hauran region (now the Golan) was grandiose. Moreover, her idea that settlers would work the land themselves (rather then be landowners) and her promotion of self-sufficient collectives were viewed as extreme socialism. The settlers already in Palestine did not rely on their own labor, nor did they live collectively. Rather, they depended on Jewish philanthropy and Arab labor.

Manya presented her ideas about settling the Hauran to the officials of the Jewish Settlement Association [ICA—phonetic Hebrew abbreviation], who promptly rejected them. Not easily dissuaded, she then spent a year surveying First Aliyah settlements and putting together a statistical survey. Her findings were not surprising: "I reached, in 1905, the firm conclusion that the system of agricultural settlement... was bankrupt in every sense of the word. As early as 1881-1882 a pioneering, wonderful, idealistic type of person came to Palestine, capable of minimal independent work. And now, after they spent 25 years in the country, we found them completely reliant on the ICA officials, lacking any faith in their enterprise, and employing Arab workers. They were all bitter and hopeless. They all believed in the Uganda option [a proposal made in 1903, to settle Jews in British East Africa]. Their sons did not continue in the farms and left the country because they could not stand the work regime that was established by the officials."

> Shohat later wrote that Sejera, her radical collective, was "the first place in Palestine open to women's work, and there the idea of the movement of women workers started to blossom."

Manya Shohat, at 25, in Europe drumming up support and funds for her radical idea: a Jewish agricultural collective in Palestine.

Manya, indefatigable, next formed a carpenters' cooperative in Jaffa, but when she left the group to fend for itself, internal dissension broke out and the cooperative disbanded. Manya realized from this experience that she needed to develop group relations and conflict resolution skills in order to put her utopian ideas of collectives into solid practice, and she did so. She also traveled to Paris, Basel, Alexandria, Canada and the United States, seeking funds, and political support, and to educate herself further about agricultural collectives (studying, for example, the system that developed in Russia after the freeing of the serfs). Manya studied all she could—about French colonies, religious communes, utopian experiments. She concluded that related models had all failed, and that there were no blueprints relevant to her special dream.

Virtually no one gave her money for her settlement plans (American Zionists being very small in number during those days); her ideas seemed absurd and fantastical to people. One important potential benefactor, Max Nordau, listened to Manya's detailed presentation for one and a half hours; and when she was done—he did not speak. When Manya inquired why he was silent, he answered by saying that he was weighing whether or not to suggest she see a physician.

Meanwhile, however, Manya was also busy raising 200,000 rubles from wealthy individuals in order to purchase revolvers which she smuggled in her clothing into Russia for Jewish defense groups. When a member of the secret police cornered her and threatened to kill her, Manya murdered him instead, shipping his body in a trunk to a fictitious address. For three months Manya participated in defense and terrorist work in the town of Shedlitz

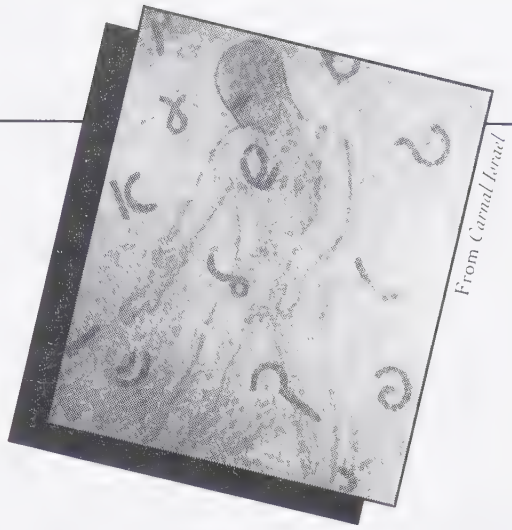
during the pogrom of 1906, never sleeping in the same place twice.

Well-known Zionist figures—Henrietta Szold, Judah Magnes, Chaim Weizmann—were impressed by this charismatic, Tolstoyan woman who continually sharpened and refined the principles that would be the basis of her imagined agricultural collective. Radically opposed to private property, committed to Arab-Jewish cooperation (unusual during that time, but consistent with Manya's commitment to Gentile peasants in Russia despite their hostility to Jews), Manya—her few influential supporters notwithstanding—received considerable rejection. One influential Zionist, Hillel Yaffe, told her baldly: "There is no hope whatsoever for your plan. You will not find people who believe in such a thing. The Keren Kayemet [Jewish National Fund] has no money for this type of experiment, nor would they understand it; and the Baron de Rothschild will under no circumstances agree to your idea."

Still she persisted, until she honed in on a farm in the Lower Galilee called Sejera. She teamed up with a young radical named Yisrael Shohat who had a mission of his own—to train Jews in self-defense. She recruited his volunteers to work on her collective while they continued their activities, beginning the Jewish guard organization HaShomer. All the elements of her plan were finally in place: she had a site, a plan and a group of workers. The year was 1907.

When she first arrived in Sejera alone, Manya obtained the right from the director, Eliahu Krause, to form a one-year collective from among some of the trainees already on hand and from Yisrael's group, which would soon be coming. The workers in the collective—18 in number—would pool their expenses, would make joint decisions about how their work was to be done, and would not hire others to work for them. They would also pool their wages in order to establish a fund to provide shelter, clothes and food for new workers who would go where work was needed for a period of two years. In this way the collective would begin to participate in the task of settling the land. Manya wrote that Sejera was also "the first place open to women's work, and there the idea of the movement of women workers started to blossom."

One of Manya's first female recruits remembered that, "In those days there was no possibility for girls 'of our type' to find any kind of work [in Palestine]. Not even as a servant in a private home. In practice, [at Sejera] we were equal in all the work with the boys. Krause used to be proud of us, and when official visitors would come, he would bring them to the fields to show them the unforgettable picture of Jewish girls wearing pants, ploughing behind the oxen."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Not only did the women of Sejera shock people by wearing pants, they also carried arms. In the evenings the men and women of the collective gathered to prepare the next day's work and to study. Krause taught them about modern agriculture; Manya lectured on socialism; Yisrael Shohat discussed the affairs of the day; David Ben Gurion (not a member of the collective but a resident on the farm) gave Hebrew lessons, and a local Arab taught Arabic. The collective established committees with specific functions, such as setting up the work assignments, and created ad hoc groups to settle disputes.

On the first proto-kibbutz in 1907, Krause taught modern agriculture, Manya Shohat lectured on socialism, David Ben Gurion gave Hebrew lessons, and a local Arab taught Arabic.

The members of the collective admired Manya. Remembered one woman, "I became a good friend of Manya Wilbushewitz's, who was very strong, and her idea was that all women should be strong and could thus take part in all the difficult and dangerous work which men do." Another member, Esther Becker, recalls: "Manya was unlike the other women, both in her appearance and in her personality. She captivated me. Manya had enormous power of persuasion. She was the center of the life of the place. She approached everyone as a sister, as a mother. She was courageous in her nightly guard duty, and in riding on a wild horse. She had enormous initiative, she had a feel for new ideas, and actualized them in her life."

Regardless of the collective's success, its contract with the farm was not renewed after its year had expired. Group members moved on to other related experiments (including solidifying and continuing HaShomer), and Manya and Yisrael became lovers. In 1908 they married and she took his name, calling herself Manya Shohat. (Manya believed that only monogamous marriage complied with "the laws of nature.") Needless to say, soon Manya developed forms of collective child rearing.

Just as Manya had predicted on the basis of her studies, the Sejera collective fulfilled the conditions of its contract, repaid what it owed, and made a small profit. Her experiment vindicated her belief that a collective agricultural economy was a viable means of Jewish settlement in Palestine. In addition, the collective model demonstrated that workers did not have to live in degrading conditions, and could sustain a cultural life. The group's simultaneous success in establishing HaShomer would become a focal point for most of the members for decades to come. Finally, the collective supported Manya's conviction that women were as capable of agricultural work as were men. For Manya, at age 27, the completion of the contract ended her search to identify the ideal socio-economic conditions for Jewish settlement in Palestine. She was to be a member of Kibbutz Kfar Giladi—which she also helped found—for the rest of her life, even though she spent many years abroad on military and fundraising missions.

It is not surprising that when looking back on that year, Manya wrote: "That was the happiest year of my life. For all of us, those were beautiful days . . . We sensed that in the future our experiment would be used as a landmark for many of the workers who would go to the land of the Jewish National Fund to work on their own responsibility; we felt that we were creating a basis for collective work for the future, for ourselves, and our children after us."

Manya Shohat, at 40, with her three brothers (all engineers) who lived in Palestine, and her sister-in-law.

When the group was transformed into HaShomer and some women went on to Um-Juni (later Kibbutz Degania), the women became extremely dissatisfied with their roles. In the next agricultural collectives (early *kvutzot* and kibbutzim) women were excluded or confined to kitchen and laundry work. Because of these problems, a woman named Hanna Meisel established, in 1911, a separate training farm for women at Kinneret, and women workers organized by holding

national meetings in Merhavia starting in 1914.

Thus, Sejera has a unique place in the history of Jewish women in Palestine and in the history of socialist experiments. The ridicule of women by men was largely suppressed at Sejera during the collective period because of Manya Shohat's personal charisma, Krause's supportive values, and the sheer number of women: exactly one third of the group members. In the next collectives established by groups at Degania and Kinneret, these factors were missing.

Manya went on to accomplish many other ambitious and courageous goals before her death at the age of 81, but her creation of the first Jewish agricultural collective in Palestine became a key factor in the creation of a strong socialist component of Israeli society. The role of a woman in laying the foundation for the subsequent development of kibbutzim, and the special role of women in Sejera are two of the many overlooked aspects of this period.

It's time to reclaim Manya Shohat as a Jewish foreparent of note, to make sure that study of her life and ideas are incorporated into all levels of Jewish education, and to integrate her into Women's Studies curricula. She belongs in the growing pantheon of Jewish women role models—her face and deeds should be familiar to us all. □

Shulamit Reinharz is Professor of Sociology and Director of the Women's Studies Program at Brandeis University, which includes among its many options a graduate degree in Jewish Women's Studies. Professor Reinharz has published scholarly articles on Manya Shohat and is currently preparing (with her husband, Jehuda Reinharz) an annotated collection of Manya Shohat's writings.

This article is adapted from Shulamit Reinharz's chapter on Manya Shohat in *Pioneers and Homemakers: Jewish Women in Pre-State Israel*, edited by Deborah S. Bernstein, State University of New York Press, 1992.

JUDAISM FEMINISM PSYCHOLOGY

Evelyn T. Beck, Ph.D. links Jewish studies, women's studies and psychology.
Nora Gold, Ph.D. discusses barriers to women taking religious leadership.
Barbara Hammer, Ph.D. presents a theory of anti-Semitism as trauma.
Yonah Klem, Ed.D. talks about using the mikvah to heal from incest.
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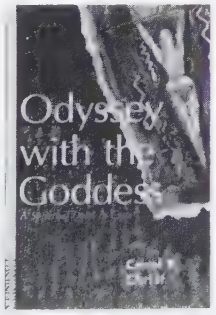

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Her Face in the Mirror & The Nakedness of the Fathers

Susan Schnur Interviews writers Faye Moskowitz and Alicia Ostriker

Two of LILITH's editors, Faye Moskowitz (fiction) and Alicia Ostriker (poetry), have recently authored new books. Her Face In The Mirror: Jewish Women on Mothers and Daughters *[Beacon Press], edited by Moskowitz, is a healing collection of poems, essays and stories by the likes of Linda Pastan, Myra Sklarew, Vivian Gornick and over 50 others.* The Nakedness of the Fathers: Biblical Visions and Revisions *[Rutgers University Press], is word-witch Alicia Ostriker's pas de deux with that crazed life-partner on her dance card—the Bible.*

Of book reviews there are enough (says our tradition), and so LILITH here chooses instead to interview Moskowitz and Ostriker about their feelings as once-again new mothers. We asked: ***From whence in your kishkas the urgency to produce this particular book?*** *And,* ***now that your baby*** *(Moskowitz's 4th; Ostriker's 12th)* ***is abroad in the world, how does it feel?***

They reply:

"God the Father swallowed God the Mother like the wolf swallowing Grandmother."
—Ostriker

"A few people asked, 'Where are the mothers who ate their children?'"
—Moskowitz

OSTRIKER: I started this book 9 years ago. I worked on it very hard for a very long time, and it's mysterious to me why I looped around and got to this at age 47. I didn't choose this task. It chose me. I fell off a cliff and found myself writing about the Bible.

Everything I had written up until then felt like preparation. I had just finished writing *Stealing the Language*, and the last chapter was about women poets' revisionist mythology—rewriting Orpheus and Eurydice, for example, from Eurydice's point of view, or Odysseus and Penelope from Penelope's point of view.

And so my object in writing this book was to take biblical stories—which belong to my mothers and my fathers and therefore to me—and to penetrate them, through writing, until they became truly mine. I wanted to understand biblical men and women and their God, with the sense that these people are my mothers and fathers, and their God is *my* God, for better or worse. My many revisions came from t sense of working ever deeper into t subject, to claim it *on my own terms*. I w obsessed. It felt like a calling, like I w being made to do this work.

I was a college student when I fi identified with a biblical character—Jacob did an etching (it still hangs on my w today) of Jacob wrestling the angel identified with both Jacob AND the ang actually, with the relationship: "I will not thee go except thou bless me." I still ca say this line without crying. Jacob is test to see if he'll think of the right thing to s which is to ask for a blessing. It's h fathers are with sons, if you ever saw father play tennis or chess, really hard, wanting the son to win. God's relationsh with us is something like that. It's what ! with the Bible itself; try to wrestle a blessi out of it.

Not having Hebrew, or any form Jewish education, often made me fe unworthy of the task, but then again didn't *choose* it. I will always feel like outsider as a Jew, but I see this as both advantage and a disadvantage—the form because I didn't have to deal with 20 years' worth of pious commentary distort what's actually in the Bible.

Much of my excitement in writing t particular book had to do with getti feedback. For example, a graduate stud of mine pointed out to me that the struct of *Esther* has to do with opposing men's to the woman's body, and the woma body wins. Whenever a new law promulgated by the king, it is signed w

signature and sealed with the king's seal
l *it can never be revoked*—and then it's
oked. Esther manages to revoke it.

Someone else pointed out to me that
ordechai and Esther were once Marduk
d Ishtar. This reinforced my own sense
reading the Bible: how the male God
allows, absorbs the Goddesses who
me before him. God the Father
allowed God the Mother like the wolf
allowing Grandmother, but God the
other is still there inside, and sometimes
u can see her kick.

One of the most important things to me
out the Bible is the fact that Abraham,
ac and Jacob are all men of peace. I think
s is probably unique in human culture—
t our national founding fathers are not
rriors, and not kings, but just family
n. They're bosses and they're rich, but I
e it that they don't go to war. Odysseus
es to war; Achilles goes to war; the
roes in Indian epics go to war.
asculinity is supposed to be identified
th the warrior character, but it doesn't
ve to be for Jews.

Now that the book is finished, I get nice
il from men and women who say it
eaks to them, and I like that, but the
ok's not mine anymore. While doing the
rk I felt as if I had a reason to live (I'm
ur standard workaholic)—having done it
a problem. I'm in distress because I don't
ow what comes next. It's frightening.
e reward is in the feeling that I'm doing
mething worth doing, but right now I'm
doing that anymore.

Why does a pianist love playing the
no? Writing is something I can do. I love
th writing and teaching [at Rutgers].
hen I'm not doing something creative—in
twenties I figured out that writing was
gratification—I get depressed, mean,
sty, rotten to live with.

Writing books is like life. You just put
e foot in front of the other, and before
u know it your babies are in college, and
n you miss them horribly, and then, after
u miss them horribly, you realize there is
e after motherhood—and it's called
ndmotherhood.

OSKOWITZ: I like to tell people all the
he about my professional late-
oming—I got my B.A. when I was 40,
and I'm now 64—because so many women feel so far behind. But I feel we're far *ahead*, because of our life experience. I stored up my desire to write for so many years, waiting to actually *do* it, because I needed to live in order to have something to say. It's as simple as that.

My mother died when I was 16, and I was then at a place in my life when I thought I didn't need a mother. I didn't grieve; I didn't even let myself realize that it was a loss. I thought my significant relationship was with my father. Much later, for a couple of years, I went through a kind of emotional blood bath. A certain kind of emptiness came into my life, unexplained blues, an overarching sadness. It was a cumulative thing.

Interestingly, it was Beacon Press that came to me with the idea of a book about Jewish mothers and daughters, not the other way around. The two years that I spent putting this book together were incredibly moving. When I opened my mail, I never knew what manuscripts I'd find. I spent half the day with my head on my desk because I was so moved by the material that women sent in. The piece about washing a mother's body—it took me days to recover from that. These two years were life-changing and therapeutic.

It doesn't come easy to me to write. I know people who can't wait to sit down at their desk, but I'd rather wash a floor any old day than actually sit myself down. What motivates me is that if I only sit long enough, think hard enough, I'll produce something that gives me pleasure. I care very much about each word—that's probably what makes it so hard, and ultimately so rewarding. I loved putting the different essays, poems and stories together in this book, to see patterns evolving, to see one piece echo another further down in the book.

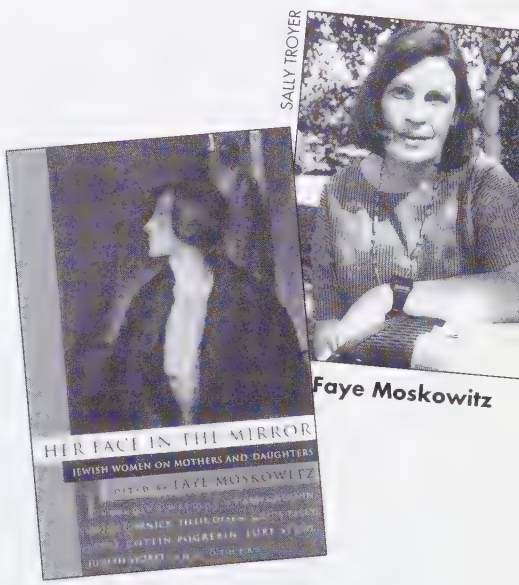
I did not want to write about the Sophie Portnoys, the stereotyped Jewish mother, intrusive, all-consuming. "Oh you're a regular Jewish mother" is *not* a compliment. A couple of people asked, "Where are the mothers who ate their children? Where are the mothers who destroyed the lives of their children?" The relationships described in this book aren't easy ones, but the women who write about them have already come out on the other side, to rapprochement. As I selected manuscripts to include, the negative portraits of mothers seemed immature. This book represents many acts of healing.

"When I'm not doing something creative, I get depressed, mean, nasty, rotten to live with."

—Ostrike

"Now that the book is finished, I have to stop hitting on myself, saying, 'What have you done lately? What have you done lately?'"

—Moskowit



I love being on my book tour now; for the most part, writers are very lonely people. The feedback is exhilarating. To have people say, "I feel this too," or "I feel differently," I delight in this, to have touched someone's life. I feel deeply person-to-person links. When I teach, I try to build a community within each class. I loved corresponding with the other writers in putting this book together. On my bookshelf I have eight file-boxes filled with letters from readers—these matter a lot to me.

Now that the book is finished, I have to let go of it, to stop hitting on myself, saying, 'What have you done lately, what have you done lately?' I'm on sabbatical this year from George Washington U., and I just took three months in Florida. Even God let Herself rest on the seventh day—this is your sabbatical! I have to relax and wait and see if the well fills up. If it doesn't, maybe these four books are what was given to me, and *fartig*.

From Chernobyl to Brooklyn

NO WORDS TO SAY GOODBYE: A YOUNG JEWISH WOMAN'S JOURNEY FROM THE SOVIET UNION INTO AMERICA—THE EXTRAORDINARY DIARIES OF RAIMONDA KOPELNITSKY by Raimonda Kopelnitsky and Kelli Pryor [Hyperion], $22.95

It is rare that a piece of history is brought alive with the kind of immediacy evident in the diaries of Raimonda Kopelnitsky. These diaries—written by Raimonda between her twelfth birthday in Ukraine and her first year of high school in Brooklyn—paint a painfully honest picture of what it means for a Jewish family to journey from the former Soviet Union to the United States. With sections prefaced by journalist Kelli Pryor, the reader comes to understand the life of Raimonda, of her family, and—by extension—of thousands from many other countries who are currently undergoing the strains of immigration and displacement.

The book begins with Pryor's 30-page oral history of the four Kopelnitskys, including humorous family anecdotes and a harrowing description of the family's experience during the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. The preface also details anti-Semitism as experienced by the family—the fear of pogroms set alongside day-to-day anti-Semitism at Raimonda's school. (For example, Raimonda talks about being singled out as a Jew in first grade by a teacher who screamed at her: "You! You bother even my liver!") Pryor also makes clear that conditions for Jews in Ukraine continue to deteriorate. Raimonda's mother recounts: "My mother sees her country in ruins. Still, she doesn't want to go to America. But when my husband and I and our children are leaving for America, Ukrainian neighbors come and say, 'How can you leave your parents here when you know someone will come after them with an ax?'"

Raimonda's diary, in a voice that is clear and unselfconscious, plunges us into her world. "Our apartment is beginning to be empty. We're giving our books and dishes and clothes to our grandparents—or we are selling everything," she writes. "Our pasts are dying in our present. And we cannot even know what the future will bring."

Raimonda recalls the final bus ride out of her town—how she takes tincture of valerian as a remedy for "heartache." The family's journey to America involves many months of waiting in different, strange European cities, and is marked by overwhelming anxiety about money, and the sort of pettiness and bickering that signal the classic stresses of emigration. Raimonda's voice remains genuine, troubled, unstaged. She describes absorbing the outbursts of her parents and brother, and longing for her grandparents left behind. The terror of newness is tempered by the miracle of Jewish schools for children in transit. "This is what the word 'freedom' means at my new school," Raimonda writes. "A person who says, 'I'm a Jew,' and feels not hatred and fear, but gets an answer, 'Me too.'"

SYLVIA PLACHY

"Our apartment is beginning to be empty. Our pasts are dying in our present. And we cannot even know what the future will bring."

Raimonda Kopelnitsky

The Kopelnitskys' arrival in New York City is followed by a stay in a welfare hotel that is only marginally less upsetting to the family than the scenes on the streets outside. "To the Kopelnitskys," editorializes Pryor, "everything seemed enlarged and ominous in America, and everything echoed with an old fear. Raimonda tried to go away to a Jewish summer camp, but panicked when what she thought was a dangerous recurrence of her radiation sickness got passed off by an American doctor as a col
(Back in Ukraine, the minister of health h
reported that the Chernobyl disaster w
"normal. An explosion, yes. But dangero
no. All things are normal." Comment
Raimonda's father, "It made fools of us.")

To Raimonda, American Jews are
times magical helping hands, at tim
puzzling disappointments, but alwa
foreign. "Here you have to fight to g
higher," she writes. "There is no ending
poverty, but no ending to wealth eith
Knowing that money isn't happiness, r
family still thinks of money as happiness,
happiness to buy something, to walk eas
into a restaurant and easily leave a tip a
easily ask in English without Russi
accents."

Perhaps most painful is Raimonda
intuitive understanding that too much h
changed for her to maintain any illusion
continuity in her li
"Emigration," she writes,
don't remember it anymo
I want that memory
sleep, and even to die
me." Her diary entrie
often written in the priva
of the Kopelnitsky
Brooklyn bathroom
"because there's no oth
place in the crowd
apartment"—are powerfu
honest.

No Words To S
Goodbye, rare and wond
ful, might well become t
classic text for an unde
standing of the Soviet Jewish immigra
experience of this generation. Raimonda i
narrator about whom we come to ca
deeply. Her diaries, marked by h
generosity of spirit, are always forwar
looking. "Still-dreaming Raimonda," s
signs one whimsical entry, and there
nothing to do but thank her for the clar
and candor of her dreams.

Anne Frank readers (children as well
adults) will be rewarded by this you
teenager's view of Soviet Jewish immigra
today. And the gritty explosions
Raimonda's family help readers to bet
understand the very real tensions that a
part of *every* American immigran
experience.

—Rachel Kad

The Art of Shedding Skin: Lynn Gottlieb, Eve, and Elie Wiesel

Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb, in her wonderful and fresh new book, *She Who Dwells Within: A Feminist Vision of a Renewed Judaism* [HarperSanFrancisco], recalls the steps she took (so familiar to many women) on her way towards becoming a feminist. In this excerpt, Gottlieb—a modern-day Eve—feels the scales fall from her very eyes as she first dares to challenge her absolutely favorite teacher, Elie Wiesel:

Elie Wiesel began intoning the names of the biblical heroes he wished us to study. By the time he pronounced the final name, I was crestfallen. His litany included Adam, but not Eve; Cain and Abel, but not their legendary sister; Abraham, but not Sarah or Hagar; Isaac, but not Rebecca; Jacob, but not Rachel, Leah, Bilhah, or Zilpah; Joseph, but not Zuleikah or Asnat; Moses and Aaron, but not Miriam or Yocheved; even Pharaoh, but not his daughter Batya.

My heart pounded in my throat. I raised my hand.

"What about the women?" I ventured.

"Oh, the women. Ah, yes, the women. Why don't you do the women?" Do the women? Was that the right verb? I felt tongue-tied.

...When called upon, I offered my version of Eve to the class. I spoke of the first woman's quest for wisdom and her desire to know from the sight of her own eyes, the taste of her own tongue, and the touch of her own hands. I spoke of the courage she summoned to trespass the boundaries imposed on her choices by a man and a God who feared her outreach. I described her initiation into the spirit world by a serpent, who taught her the art of shedding skin. Then I paused. I looked at my teacher's face. How would he respond to my rendition of Eve?

Wiesel smiled, sighed, rolled his eyes, and countered my tale with one of his own. According to my teacher, woman's basic gullibility doomed her to exile from the garden. As Wiesel told the story, Eve found herself alone one afternoon for the first time after Adam strolled off somewhere. Drawing on traditional commentary, Wiesel related how the snake took the opportunity to seduce Eve, using her own words, into eating the forbidden fruit. Alas, conjectured Wiesel, if only Adam had stayed at home to supervise his foolish wife. She wouldn't have gotten herself and the rest of humanity into so much trouble. When Adam finally returned from his adventure, Eve cried until her befuddled husband ate the forbidden fruit as well. "And who can refuse a tearful wife?" quipped Wiesel. "Anyway, no tragedy is complete without a woman."

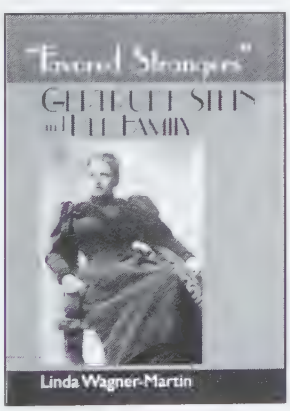
I gazed into Wiesel's soft, pensive eyes. For all his powers of imagination, he could not think beyond the weary stereotypes of women so endlessly repeated in Jewish literature.

—*Susan Schnur*

FAVORED
TRANGERS"

ertrude Stein and
er Family

NDA WAGNER-MARTIN



n this haunting and compas-
nate portrait, Linda Wagner-
artin reveals the human di-
ensions of the Mother of Modernism and in so doing
erturns almost everything we thought we knew about
ertrude Stein."

—Shari Benstock, author of *Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900-1940*

ascinating, surprising, full of intrigue, gossip, and wholly
w information. It's a monument and a pleasure."

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MAKING STORIES, MAKING SELVES: FEMINIST REFLECTIONS ON THE HOLOCAUST by R. Ruth Linden [Ohio State University Press], $39.50 hardcover; $14.95 paper

This very feminist book, by a post-positivist ethnographer, is only tangentially about the Holocaust. Using survivors' stories as a springboard (Linden was a founder of the San Francisco Holocaust Oral History Project), the author explores, among other issues, herself: everything from her outbursts at her mother during her sister's wedding to her alienation from her 1970's Santa Cruz women's collective.

Starting from the academic assumption that "objectivity is dead," *Making Stories* inadvertently challenges readers to ask whether subjectivity too—exploring how "we are all part of one another," in Barbara Deming's words (quoted in *Making Stories*)—shouldn't also be declared dead. At what point does it become narcissistic to place our own stories side-by-side with our informants' (in this case, Holocaust survivors)—obscuring asymmetry? At what point does it become vulgar to claim, as Linden does, that "Holocaust survivors' stories have become my own?"

Making Stories is an important read for those interested in scrupulously honest, experimental explorations of the Holocaust, as well as for those beginning to wonder whether that guiding feminist principle—that the personal *is* the political—might sometimes be in need of a restraining order.

—*S.S.*

A BREATH OF LIFE: FEMINISM IN THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY by Sylvia Barack Fishman [Free Press], $22.95

Question: What's been the single most revitalizing factor in the last two decades in American Judaism? *Answer*: Feminism.

In this comprehensive, very readable piece of scholarship, Sylvia Barack Fishman, assistant professor of Contemporary American Jewish Life at Brandeis University, charts how today's feminists (like turn-of-the-century Eastern European Jews or, later, Holocaust survivors) are responsible for American Judaism's fresh air. Examining women's presence different Jewish spheres—in development of liturgy, in education, communal leadership, in the arts, broadening sexual and gender roles, choices pertaining to parenthood—Fishm documents that, because of feminism, we living during an age of Jewish efflorescen Includes interviews and new demograp data. A germinal work.

—

JEWISH AMERICAN WOMEN WRITERS: A BIO-BIBLIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL SOURCEBOOK by Ann Shapiro, Sara Horowitz, Ellen Schiff and Miriyam Glazer [Greenwood Press], $89.50 (yes, it's expensive)

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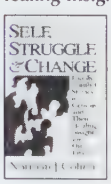

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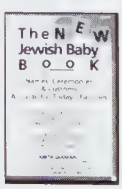

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rches for "the ultimate *shiksa*," or hian pronunciamentos such as (from *The unterlife*), "Circumcision confirms that re is an us."

A "who's who" of Jewish American men writers can only mean that we've ne of age. This highly readable guide to life and work of 57 people—including n Chernin, Edna Ferber, Emma Lazarus, becca Goldstein, Lillian Hellman, rtrude Stein, Erica Jong, Susan Sontag, va Reich, Robin Morgan, Leslea wman, Andrea Dworkin—is just plain iting. Kudos.

—*S.S.*

GENDER AND THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT: THE POLITICS OF WOMEN'S RESISTANCE by Simona Sharoni [Syracuse University Press], $29.95 hardcover; $14.95 paper

When author Simona Sharoni was asked her opinion on the Oslo Accord, she mmented that it was ironic that "high-king Israeli generals, who spent a good portion of their lives waging war, have now become the ultimate voices of authority on peace, while the perspectives and experience of women peace activists have been rendered trivial."

In *Gender and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, Sharoni, a Jewish Israeli who is currently a professor of peace and conflict resolution at American University in D.C., describes how "gender relations both within and between Palestinian and Israeli communities have played a major role in shaping the Intifada."

Covering the years 1987 through 1993, Sharoni presents the history of Palestinian and Israeli-Jewish women in relation to the conflict, argues that men must become "visible as *men*, exposing the discourse of militarized masculinity underlying the Israeli-Palestinian conflict," and examines Palestinian women's growing awareness that the struggle for national liberation and for gender equality are inseparable. Thorough and scholarly, Sharoni's voice is an important addition to more conventional views on the endless "peace" process.

–*S.S.*

GENESIS: THE BEGINNING OF DESIRE by Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg [Jewish Publication Society], $34.95

Avivah Zornberg—doyenne of Jerusalem Torah study—is perhaps the only scholar in the world equally at home with the difficult American poetry of Wallace Stevens and the medieval homiletics of Ephraim Solomon ben Hayyim of Luntshitz. In this beautiful, but dense and demanding, commentary on the book of Genesis, Zornberg invites readers to enter the "restlessness" of Genesis, to discover that what is "hidden there is, essentially, the reader's most intimate life."

Drawing from a remarkably wide range of sources (from George Eliot to Paul Ricoeur to Ba'al Ha-Turim), Zornberg's *Genesis* usually reads as rhetorical brilliance, but once in a while reads as indulged free-association. The author's rabbinic (and English lit. crit.) style of over-digesting a word or phrase can feel obsessive and suffocating. On the whole, though, the effect is dazzling. There is no

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"A significant contribution. . . . What unifies it is the concern it shows for the Jewish woman's place in the social hierarchy, the official terms of her social roles and statuses, and her negotiation of them." – Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, YIVO Institute for Jewish Studies, New York

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question that, as a female Torah scholar, Avivah Zornberg breaks ground (along with Nechama Leibowitz) that's been hungering to be broken for centuries. As Blu Greenberg has heralded: "A great teacher has arisen in Israel!"

—*S.S.*

AUSCHWITZ AND AFTER by Charlotte Delbo [Yale University Press], $25.00

In this memoir, Charlotte Delbo, French novelist and playwright, delivers an insightful, non-Jewish perspective of the Holocaust experience. Through scores of poetry, short stories, and vignettes—*perhaps too many*—Delbo shares with the reader the intimate and powerful lessons she learned as an inmate at Auschwitz. She reveals the details: from scrubbing her body furiously with gravel in a stream (after not having washed in a year), to the never-ending quest for respite from thirst. ("Once again," she writes, "the paste of rotting leaves petrified into mortar fills my dry mouth.") The reader also learns about a survivor's inability to escape the death camps even after liberation: "As far as I'm concerned, I'm still there, dying there, a little more each day." At times, Delbo is almost too good at describing the horrible events around her. She conveys what it is like literally to count days, and brutally makes us feel the paradox of surviving: Which is worse—being stolen from the world you lived in, or being returned to a world in which you no longer belong?

—*S.Z.*

COMMON SENSE AND A LITTLE FIRE: WOMEN AND WORKING CLASSS POLITICS IN THE UNITED STATES, 1900-1965, by Annalise Orleck [University of North Carolina Press], $39.95 hardcover, $15.95 paper

The four pre-eminent, long-lived Jewish women of the "vintage of 1909" who led the first "uprising" of women workers are profiled in this collective biography. Immigrants Fania Cohn, Pauline Newma Rose Schneiderman and Clara Lemli Shavelson were all catalyzed by t Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire to dedic their lives to what Annalise Orleck ca "industrial feminism." Characterized organizing women around "bread a roses" issues, it was inspired "by a hea mix of ideology gleaned from Isaiah, Ma and their mothers." These four wom persevered through personal/politic struggles with men in their own class, wi women patrons, with colleagues and lif partners of the middle and upper classe and with each other, to achieve, ov decades, unprecedented victories in uni and consumer organizing, suffrage, a women's and workers' rights. (Doubtle the four women will be easier to ke straight in the TV mini-series that shou be made about their lives.) All four a both unique historically and timeless emblematic of Jewish women activist Their passionate life choices a unwavering agenda for social transfo mation are still radical today. —*N.L.M*

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WHEN A GRANDPARENT DIES: A KID'S OWN REMEMBERING WORKBOOK FOR DEALING WITH SHIVA AND THE YEAR BEYOND by Nechama Liss-Levinson [Jewish Lights Publishing] , $14.95 hardcover

An intelligent, realistic, therapeutic book can keep a child (age 4-12) filling in nk spaces for a whole year after Grandma Grandpa dies: *Who was Grandpa named ? What didn't you like about Grandma? nething Grandpa always used to say was _____. Be a Shiva Detective and visitors what was the most fun time they with Grandma. What's Grandma's sonal Hanukkah story (a battle she ght and won in her life)? On Pesach, at Four Questions would you ask ndpa if he were still alive? A good pe Grandpa's was_____. Who told that Grandma died and what did they ? (What questions do you still have?) at special gift did Grandma give you that can't buy in a store? When you're a ndparent, you would like to _____.* Indeed, one of the best ways to help a ld through a grandparent's shiva is to p her or him busy with concrete tasks pecially since many children feel guilty ut feeling nothing). This book—suitable o for a grownup and child to do together nippets—fits the emotional bill, and ends peing, I'm sure, an exceptional keepsake. —*S.S.*

THE JEWS OF MEDIEVAL FRANCE: THE COMMUNITY OF CHAMPAGNE by Emily Taitz [Greenwood Press] $59.95

Extraordinary rabbinic literary talents—t continue to impact upon Jewish lives ay—blossomed in the Jewish community Champagne in the 11th and 12th centuries. omon ben Isaac of Troyes, or Rashi, is t known for his exhaustive commentary nterpreting the literal meaning of the ah, and his grandsons, Rabbi Samuel ben ir (Rashbam) and Rabbi Jacob ben Meir bbeinu Tam), along with other disciples, te glosses on the Mishna and Gemara led *Tosafot)* that are still studied today. It in Champagne that the traditional Jewish thodology developed of answering temporary halakhic questions on the basis of examining earlier texts. Nevertheless, Champagne's Jewish community died by the end of the 12th century. In this lucid scholarly work, Taitz describes the economic, social, political and religious trends that set the stage for, and eventually caused the demise of, this unusual community.

At the beginning of this period, local fairs flourished in an unprecedented way in an economy that thrived on cultural diversity and tolerance. Money and money-lending became increasingly important--impacting Jews in ways that were positive in the short run, but brutal in the long run. Books, especially the Bible for Christians and the Talmud for Jews, became more readily available to people and importantly influenced people's thought and behavior. Eventually, however, the monarchy's consolidation of power over local nobility, plus the increasing power of the Pope and the Church, came together as a force for cultural homogeneity. Ultimately an environment came into being that was inhospitable to Jews, who, though they adopted the language and many of the customs of the people around them, kept an irritatingly enduring core of religious ideas and traditions.The Crusades, and the 'trial' of the Talmud followed by the burning of 12,000 Talmudic volumes in Paris in 1242, culminated in the expulsion of the Jews from France in 1306.

Taitz, co-author with Sondra Henry of *Written Out of History: Our Jewish Foremothers,* writes a satisfying history that also weaves the roles of women into the various trends she discusses. She cites, for example, several *takkanot* (rabbinic decrees) designed to protect women. One required a husband who would be traveling for more than 18 months (quite common then) to support his wife and children while he was away, and to stay home for at least six months on his return. Another decreed that if a man was known to be a habitual wife beater he may not live with his wife, but must continue to support her. Taitz also mentions that Jewish women sometimes managed and sold land during that era, and were commonly moneylenders. There was also even known to be a Jewish female physician in Paris in 1297.

Altogether, an insightful history of a very important Jewish era. —*N.D.*

Reviewers are Naomi Danis, Nora Lee Mandel, Susan Schnur and Shira Zeltzer.

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they're weighted
with pure uselessness.
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a few lyrics out?

Three times my hands
circle the flames, draw
the light over my eyes.
Don't ask me
if I believe or not.
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Study in Israel

Dialogue and understanding between religious and secular Jews in Israel is the challenge being met by Elul, a unique learning center in Jerusalem devoted to *Talmud Torah* (Jewish studies). This is the only setting in Israel bridging the wide chasm between believers and secularists. In its core program —the Beit Midrash—40 women and men study 20 hours per week, in *hevruta* (traditionally two or three people studying texts together). They participate in weekly public forums, and serve as coordinators of outreach programs to immigrants, army officers, discharged soldiers, and elementary and high school students. Information from *Elul, P.O.Box 8158, Jerusalem, Israel; (972-2)619436; fax (972-2) 619425.* Contributions to *P.E.F. Israel Endowment Funds, 41 E. 42nd St., #607, NY, NY 10017.*

The first Conservative yeshiva in Jerusalem will be an open co-educational environment with a critical approach to the study of texts. Students will learn Talmud, Hebrew Scriptures, and rabbinic literature at least seven hours a day from teachers and with *hevruta* (study buddies). This program is intended for high school graduates seeking a year of intensive Jewish study in Israel before college; college graduates considering a career in Jewish education; and others who simply wish to study. Contact *United Synagogue Yeshiva Program, 155 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10010; fax (212)353-9439;* or *Center for Conservative Judaism in Jerusalem, 2 Agron St., P.O. Box 7456, Jerusalem 94265 Israel; fax (972-2)234127;* or *Rabbi Ed Romm, registrar, e-mail: msromm@pluto.mscc. huji.ac.il*

On Campus

New Voices, The Independent National Jewish Student News Magazine, published by the Jewish Student Press Service, needs writers, artists, copy editors, proofreaders, photographers, graphic illustrators, and people to let them know what's happening with Jewish folks on campus and off. Interested in working to develop an alternative student press? Contact *Ilana Polyak, (212)643-1890; e-mail: jsps@panix.com*

Jewish Studies Courses at American and Canadian Universities: A Catalog lists 410 institutions, with the titles of courses they offer, and includes a list of 103 endowed Jewish Studies positions in non-Jewish colleges and universities in the U.S. and Canada. This updated version (of the original 1979 catalog of the Associati for Jewish Studies) was prepared by Elizabeth Vernor and edited by Charles Berlin. Paperback $14.95. *Ktav Publishing, 900 Jefferson St., Hoboken, NJ 07030; fax (201)963-0102.*

Role Models

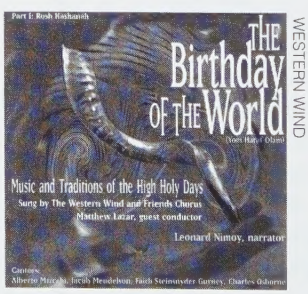
Women Members of the Rabbinical Assembly is a directory listing names, addre ses, lecture topics, publicatior and accomplishments of 71 rabbis who are available as scholars-in-residence, speaker teachers and consultants. Published in honor of the 10th anniversary of the ordination o women in the Conservative movement. Request the bookl from *Rabbi Lori Forman, 165 56th St., New York, NY 10022 fax (212)751-4018.*

Ritual, Liturgy & Remembering Holidays

Original Seder plates are sought for a competition recognizing exemplary work in Jewish ceremonial art. The winning artist will receive $10,000, and finalists will become part of a special exhibition at the Spertus Museum and elsewhere. Entrance dead-

line January 15, 1996. Application and information from *Philip and Sylvia Spertus Judaica Prize, Spertus Museum, 618 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60605; (312)322-1747; fax (312)922-3934.*

The Birthday of the World, Part 1, is a compact disk of High Holiday music sung by a cappella ensemble The


Part I: Rosh Hashanah
The Birthday of the World
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Sung by The Western Wind and Friends Chorus
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Leonard Nimoy, narrator
WESTERN WIND

Western Wind, with guest cantors Alberto Mizrahi, Faith Steinsnyder Gurney, Jacob Mendelson and Charles Osborne. Comprising the major prayers of Rosh Hashanah, the music is drawn from ancient through modern Jewish traditions, including Sephardic hymns and contemporary Israeli and American works. A commentary by Rabbi Gerald Skolnik is spoken by actor Leonard Nimoy. Part 2, Yom Kippur, arrives in 1996. In your record store, or call *800-788-2187.*

The Jewish Way through Clay offers a combination of ceramic experiences: a feminist workshop for women reclaiming a Jewish spiritiual path, "Vessel as Self-Portrait;" a hands-on workshop teaching adults or children to create personalized Judaica objects; and a slide lecture on the history of Jewish ceremonial arts and their relationship to the indigenous arts of their countries of origin. Contact the artist *Lia Lynn Rosen, Yetzirah Pottery, 1703 Anderson Place. SE, Albuquerque NM 87108; (505)262-4801.*

Saluting Jerusalem on its 3000th Anniversary, a 1995-96 memo and date book lists traditional holidays celebrated by America's ethnically and religiously varied population. Photos of Jerusalem show it, too, as a center of multi-cultural and religious diversity. $4.95 each; quantity discounts available. *Anti-Defamation League, # MD96, 823 U. N. Plaza, New York, NY 10017.*

Special Events

***Di Froyen:* Women and Yiddish** is a conference devoted to celebrating women's contributions to the Yiddish culture of Eastern Europe and the immigrant communities of North America, and women's current role in passing on the Yiddish cultural legacy. An impressive list of about 50 women—too many to sample here—will share their scholarship, art, and theatrical performance. Saturday evening and Sunday, October 28-29 in New York City. (See this magazine's inside cover ad.) Information from *Jewish Women's Resource Center, National Council of Jewish Women, New York Section, 9 E. 69th St., New York, NY 10021; (212)535-5900; fax (212)535-5909.*

In Search of Ourselves: The Power of Jewish Women is a symposium featuring a keynote address by Francine Klagsbrun, and 24 workshops led by activists, scholars, rabbis and other experts on subjects such as bodies, children, divorce, domestic violence, ethics, feminism, glass ceilings, Israeli women, lesbians, meditation, men, milestones, money, and mothers. Sunday, November 12 at Barnard College. $36 fee ($18 for students) includes breakfast and lunch. Contact the co-sponsors: *New York Chapter of Hadassah, 575 Lexington Ave, 5th Fl, New York, NY 10022; (212)765-7050; or the Barnard Center for Research on Women, (212)854-2067.*

Voices of Hope: Echoes of Women's Spirituality is a conference that will explore women's ways of discovering and articulating their spiritual journeys, and the contributions that women make to their communities within and outside traditional religions. Speakers will include women from these traditions: Aboriginal, Wiccan, Buddhist, Muslim, Jewish, Sikh, Roman Catholic, Hindu, Baha'i, and Spiritual Feminists. May 15-19, 1996, University of Victoria, Victoria, BC. Information from *Conference Management, Division of Continuing Studies, University of Victoria, Box 3030, MS 8451, Victoria, BC., Canada V8W 3N6; (604)721-8470; fax (604)721-8774; e-mail: pmcguire@postoffice.uvic.ca*

The 75th Anniversary of a Woman's Right to Vote (in the United States) is being celebrated all year in special programs in Susan B. Anthony's hometown, Rochester, NY. For a calendar of events, contact *Woman's Suffrage 75th Anniversary Office, Dewey Hall, #411, University of Rochester, Rochester, NY 14627; (716)275-8799; fax (716)242-5810.*

a book of biographies of sh women activists, munity leaders, artists, organizers which will be keted for high school girls, names of women you'd to see included, why they ignificant, and, if possible, raphical sources. Mail your estions to *Hemshekh, inist Institute for Jewish ural Continuity, P.O.Box Veneta, OR 97487; e-mail: shekh@aol.com*

ith Children

December Dilemma: ng Chanukah in a istmas World is a family ering at the Jewish Museum ew York City for parents children ages 3-8, sponsor- y the Jewish Early Child- l Association. Storytelling, and crafts, continental kfast and a concluding fest are all part of a pro- designed to enrich the sh living of families of ing backgrounds and con- ations, with discussion ps geared to single-parent, Jewish-parent, and inter- families. Sunday morning ember 5. $36 per family. act *Early Childhood Dept., d of Jewish Education,)245-8200 x 322.*

Jewish Parenting Today: A Guide to Family Living in New York is a monthly newsmagazine appealing to a broad spectrum of Jewish families and focusing on issues such as education, rituals and holidays, health, travel and popular culture. Published by Sharon Goldman Edry and Sandy Edry, it includes local news, book reviews and calendar listings. Available free at schools, synagogues, community centers and stores or by subscription at $28/year. *JPT, 2472 Broadway, Box 293, New York, NY 10025; (212)961-9520; fax (212)663-1964; e-mail JPToday@aol.com*

JAY GOLDSPINNER

The Goddess Comes in Living Color, a coloring book for all ages, includes the characters Lilith and Eve. $10 plus $3 postage. Available from the artist, *Jay Goldspinner, 56 Orchard St., Greenfield, MA 01301; (413)773-8033.*

Health

How alcohol and drugs affect women is the subject of a revised and updated booklet, "Healthy Women/Healthy Lifestyles." Publication #PHD691, free from the *National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information, P.O.Box 2345, Rockville, MD 20847; 800-729-6686; e-mail info@prevline.health.org*

Do you have a critical and creative perspective on panic, phobia and anxiety? Submit yours for a collection of writings by women. Any work which challenges and explores current thinking—academic and political papers, fiction, nonfiction and poetry—will be considered. Send along a paragraph about yourself with your submission, or request more information. Deadline December 1. Write to *Sidney Matrix and Noel Morgan, Editors, c/o 111 Dunlop St. E., #2028, Barrie, Ontario, L4M 6J5, Canada; e-mail:reynolds@bosshog.arts.uwo.ca or matrixs @yorku.ca*

Women with advanced stage breast cancer are sought for clinical trials of the anti-cancer drug, Taxotere (docetaxel), comparing its effectiveness with another anti-cancer drug, Taxol (paclitaxel). To be directed to the most convenient trial site, patients or healthcare professionals may call *800-798-7425.*

Testimony

Witnesses to Nazi atrocities in or near the villages or towns of Kislovodsk, Galtchik, Mineraluye Vodi, Skalat and Ternopol in the F.S.U. during World War II (for Case 25); survivors from the Ukraine who lived in or near the village of Vorms (Worms), Berezovka Rayon, Odessa Oblast from 1941 to 1944 (for Cases 47 and 58); and individuals who were in the Kaiserwald or Bikernieki Forest area of Latvia between July 1941 and December 1942 (for Case 65): If you are willing to be interviewed for investigations in cooperation with the War Crimes and Special Investigation Section of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, contact *Eliot Welles, Director, A.D.L. Task Force on Nazi War Criminals, 823 U.N. Plaza, New York, NY 10017; (212)885-7769; or call the Royal Canadian Mounted Police collect at (613)990-8484.*

—compiled by Naomi Danis

FREE-ASSOCIATING WITH ERICA JONG
(It Ain't Over Till It's Over)

by Robin Epstein

Last March, I had the opportunity to meet and interview Erica Jong, the famous writer of such novels as Fear of Flying *and* Serenissima, *at her office on 68th Street in Manhattan. It was part of my senior thesis at Princeton—"Post-Jewish Fiction: Deconstruction of Identity in the New York Comic Narrative"—which I did under Elaine Showalter.*

When I arrived at Jong's office-suite in Manhattan, I was instantly taken aback by the fact that the woman who had written so exuberantly about the "zipless fuck" was a dead ringer for my mother. With frosted hair, round glasses, dressed smartly, and standing at about five feet two, she was several inches shorter than me. I was very conscious of the fact that physically I was much bigger than the woman who was larger than life in my imagination. What follows are some out-takes from my interview:

ROBIN EPSTEIN: Do you consider yourself to be an observant Jew, and, if so, observant of what?

ERICA JONG: I consider myself to be passionately Jewish, but I'm not an observant Jew. An observant Jew is someone who goes to synagogue.

EPSTEIN: Are you raising your [16-year-old] daughter to be Jewish?

JONG: Um [pause], unfortunately not. I am raising my daughter…she's *proud* to be Jewish. She was not bat mitzvahed, nor was I. And we don't belong to a synagogue. And the reason we don't is we haven't yet found one that we feel comfortable at—but we're searching. I have in mind if I don't find one, to found one.

EPSTEIN: Can a mother have any influence on a daughter's body image?

JONG: Some, but not enough. The culture, you know at a certain point teenagers are raised by the culture and you, I mean, what are you going to say if you have a kid who is *zaftig* and full-bosomed and plump, and you say, 'Well, in Tintoretto's day, you would have been the model of beauty.' You know the kid is going to say, 'You idiot, you dork,' so you know, maybe later they could appreciate that, but….

EPSTEIN: Do you talk to your daughter openly about sex?

JONG: My daughter won't let me. She squirms when the subject is brought up, and says, 'CHANGE THE SUBJECT!' The inhibition about sexuality is said to come from parents—in fact it comes from children who don't want to talk about sex with their parents.

EPSTEIN: You've been married to both Jewish and non-Jewish men. I'm curious in the context of your thoughts on interfaith relationships, what do you think of Woody Allen and Soon-Yi Previn?

JONG: That's a long question. Actually, I have been married to three Jewish men and one non-Jewish man, and I have had relationships with many non-Jewish men, but Allen Jong was practically Jewish. He w Chinese psychiatrist. He was a Freudian, so that practically makes Jewish. But most of my husbands have been Jewish, so I gu gravitate to the kind of…and I would say because of the humor an intimacy that I find with them which I think I need. You had an question, I've forgotten….

EPSTEIN: Woody Allen and Soon Yi Previn?

JONG: Oh, just a typical older man having his male menopause fucking his stepdaughter.

CHRISTOPHE VON HOHENBERG

The Thinker: Erica Jong contemplates Judaism, Soon Yi Previn, pornography, Tintoretto, and her teen daughter, Molly.

EPSTEIN: You have been called a pornograp and a 'sex writer.' Is there any accuracy to this?

JONG: It's ridiculous. I don't know what definition of pornography is, and nobody else either. Pornography is somebody else's erotica you don't like. People are interested in their sexuality, and they have always reflected it in art. End of story. What I did, that was ma different was that I wrote from a woman's poi view. And I tried to slice open a woman's head, show what her fantasies were. So that's a revolu of sorts, an enormous revolution, the revolutio our century going from the male point of view t female…and I would say the most frequent resp is 'Thank you. For making me feel I am not a fr

EPSTEIN: Do you have a favorite boo erotica?

JONG: I think *The Story of O* is pretty ter Very skillful. Interesting because it deals surrender. I mean if you read it politically, you to be upset, but I don't read it politically. I would it's not prescriptive…I think that Cathe MacKinnon is as dangerous as Newt Gingrich and Jesse Helm mean, she's the same: she sees every work as prescriptive. She baleful influence on feminism.

EPSTEIN: What books were influential to you as a young wo and would you recommend them to your daughter, and is she rea them?

JONG: Well, I loved *The Catcher in the Rye*. I read Dostoevs loved *Huckleberry Finn*. I loved George Bernard Shaw's plays. I l Byron. Yeah, I ply my daughter, but she's not a great reader.

EPSTEIN: Do you see her writing in the future?

JONG: You know I really wish Molly read more. Molly is wo out her rebellion on me, but she'll come back to it. She's very smart

EPSTEIN: Does she want to be a writer?

JONG: No. Absolutely not. No, she thinks writers have awful lives

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Robin Epstein is a newly minted (and still unemployed—h graduate of Princeton University.